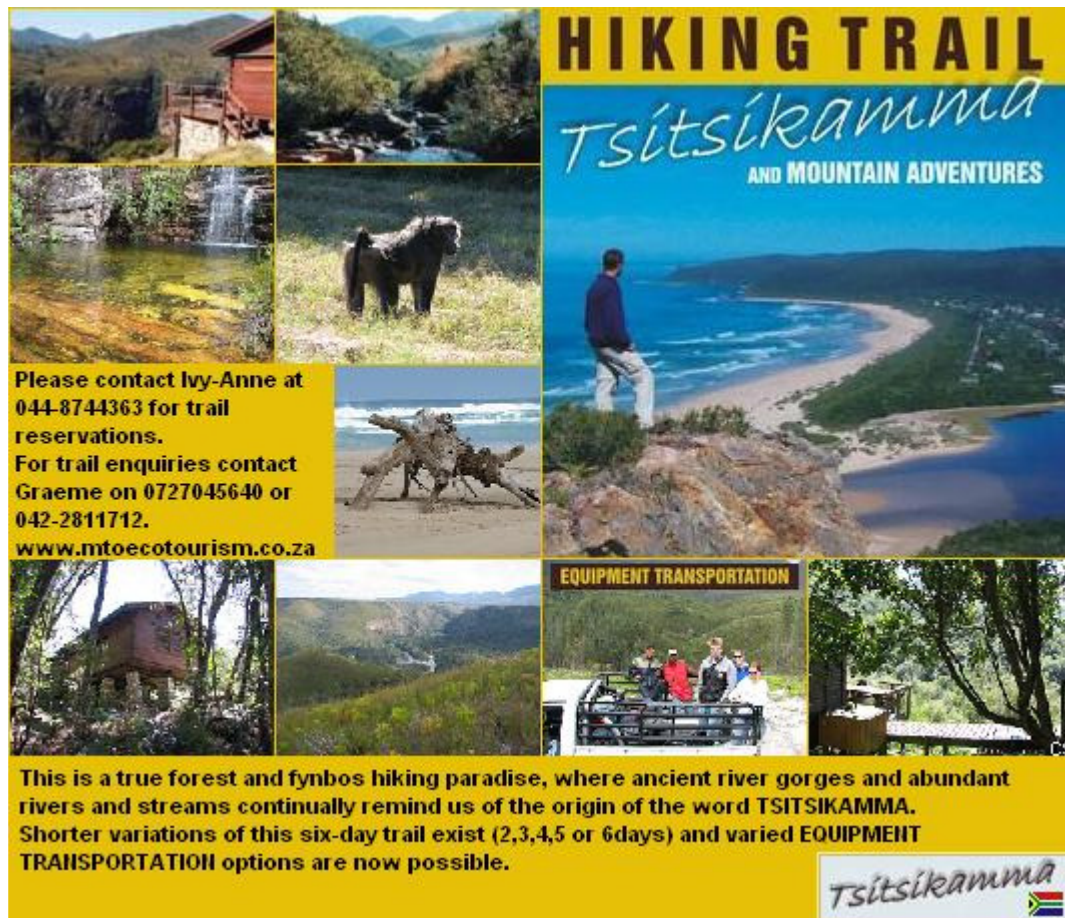



TSITSIKAMMA HIKING TRAIL:



Please contact Ivy-Anne at 044-8744363 for trail reservations.
For trail enquiries contact Graeme on 0727045640 or 042-2811712.
www.mtoecotourism.co.za

EQUIPMENT TRANSPORTATION

This is a true forest and fynbos hiking paradise, where ancient river gorges and abundant rivers and streams continually remind us of the origin of the word TSITSIKAMMA. Shorter variations of this six-day trail exist (2,3,4,5 or 6 days) and varied EQUIPMENT TRANSPORTATION options are now possible.

Tsitsikamma 

GENERAL INFORMATION:

The Tsitsikamma Trail is a southern Cape hiking paradise, journeying through extensive indigenous afro-montane forest and mountain fynbos. Ancient river gorges and abundant rivers and streams continually remind us of the creative power of water and the origins of the word Tsitsikamma. This is an enchanted world where echoes of past giants such as elephant and buffalo can still be felt. Some of the finest specimens of South Africa's national tree, the Outeniqua yellowwood, keep sentinel over the forest canopy while hikers clamber over their enormous roots beneath.

Beginning in Nature's Valley and ending 60-km further at either the Storms River Bridge or Village, this six-day, unidirectional trail takes hikers through the heart of the Tsitsikamma Mountains. Shorter variations (2,3,4 or 5 days) are possible as each of the five overnight huts has its own unique access route with safe parking at the start.

Optional equipment portage (slackpacking) now provides hikers with the chance of having all their equipment transported between overnight huts, allowing the luxury of carrying only daypacks on each day's journey. This makes the trail accessible to a wider range of people and provides all with more time for swimming, photography, birding and other activities usually limited by time or weight constraints. It also means fresh food and drinks each night at the overnight huts, allowing hikers to bring a variety of goods not normally going into the backpacks. Field guides and binoculars are definitely recommended along this exciting and unpredictable journey. Many of the forest giants are labeled with their tree names and hikers can have much fun with guessing and identification games along the route.

Other activities now permitted include vehicular and mountain bike access to certain overnight huts and informative guided day walks. We also provide a transport service for hikers between huts and various other points along the trail.

ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES:

The trail's overnight accommodation facilities have been upgraded to an excellent standard with truly magnificent views. Relaxation in comfort can be enjoyed at each of the five overnight huts.

Each hut is supplied with bunk beds and mattresses accommodating a maximum of 24 hikers per night. Spacious balconies with undercover wooden table and chair combinations provide for a congenial patio setting.

Each hut has an adjacent cooking shelter/lapa and is supplied with braai grids, kettles, 2 cast iron pots, a large pan and washing-up basin. There is both an undercover and outside braai area at each lapa, affording hikers the opportunity to make a fire even in adverse weather conditions. Firewood is supplied at all overnight huts.

The ablution facilities at each hut have two flush toilets, two showers and a wash basin. A novel hot water shower-bucket is available at all five overnight huts. Clean, fresh water is readily available from the rain-tank taps and at basins.

Additional firewood at overnight huts can be pre-arranged on request. (There is sufficient firewood in place for cooking and showering at each hut, - this request refers to additional wood for other reasons).

Along the route little contact is made with the outside world, except for the odd forestry activity here and there. Baboon, vervet monkey, large-spotted genet, bushpig and bushbuck are often encountered along the route and at overnight huts. Leopard, caracal, honey badger and blue duiker also occur, but are seldom seen. The forests provide ideal habitat for lesser seen bird species, such as rameron pigeon, narina trogon, sombre bulbul, forest buzzard, and colourful sunbirds and flycatchers. The fynbos harbours elusive endemics such as Victorin's warbler, protea canary and the Cape siskin.

ACCREDITATION:

The Tsitsikamma Hiking Trail was South Africa's first officially accredited hiking trail. (It may possibly be the world's first officially accredited hiking trail as well).

It is accredited by The South African Trail Owners Association (SATO) as a trail:

- In a pristine environment,
- With standard to luxury accommodation,
- With a moderate - difficult grading,
- With excellent trail facilities.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION AND DISTANCES BETWEEN OVERNIGHT HUTS:

Day 1: Nature's Valley - Kalandar Hut: (3,6km +/- 1 hour 30 mins)



The first day follows the eastern bank of the Groot River lagoon. Sounds from the plentiful birdlife and the Indian Ocean at Nature's Valley accompany you through tall, dry indigenous coastal forest to the Kalandar hut. The hut is nestled in the dune forest at the base of the spectacular Douwurmkop. The Ocean and lagoon are a mere stroll away.

Day 2: Kalandar - Blaauwkrans Hut: (13,5km +/- 6 hours)



The day begins with a climb up the escarpment. Panoramic views and changing vegetation herald the arrival of the plateau and its wealth of fynbos. Most of the day's hike however, will take you through indigenous afro-montane forest as you venture inland towards the foothills of the Tsitsikamma Mountains. The Blaauwkrans hut is situated on the verge of a cliff and offers incredible views of the river gorges below and Peak Formosa and the Tsitsikamma Mountains to the north. A couple of hundred metres beneath the balcony a coca-cola coloured waterfall tumbles away. Here private rock pools and falls provide an awesome swimming experience. A large-spotted genet pair and bushpig male are regular overnight visitors as well.

Day 3: Blaauwkrans - Keurbos Hut: (13,4km +/- 6 hours)



Day three takes one deep into the Tsitsikamma Mountains and forest. This is a wetter and more remote world where a true sense of isolation begins to take hold. Buffelsbos is where the last buffalo of the Tsitsikamma was shot and killed in 1886. In this eerie and enchanted patch of indigenous forest the trail begins its eastward course through the mountains. The crossing of the Bloukrantz River at Waterwitelsgat is always exciting and provides a wonderful swimming and resting place. The rest of the day follows predominantly flat terrain through flower-rich fynbos and relic forest. Shortly before reaching Keurbos hut there are rockpools resembling natural jacuzis at the twintubs. The hut is situated in the wetter Keurbos forest. Here both red and white alder are plentiful and the narina trogon's plaintive call is sometimes heard.

Day 4: Keurbos - Heuningbos Hut: (13,4km +/- 6 hours)



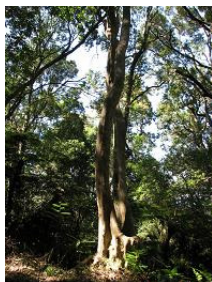
Day four passes through very diverse habitat types and has a number of exciting river crossings. After an approximate 1,5km gradual descent from Keurbos hut through very tall fynbos the Lottering River is reached. Hikers should proceed slowly up Rushes Pass, pausing regularly to appreciate the majestic views. Once over the saddle, large pockets of untouched indigenous forest become visible in remote mountain regions. The path then descends for a similar distance to follow the western bank of the Elandsbos River for almost a kilometre before reaching the newly constructed swing bridge. Care must be taken when negotiating this 20m river crossing. Heuningbos indigenous forest has many hidden secrets awaiting hikers further ahead. After the final descent towards the hut a stream and the Kleinbos river run across the path. A very pleasant swimming pool lies within rolling distance away.

Day 5: Heuningbos - Sleepkloof Hut: (13,9km +/- 7 hours)



The longest day of the trail will see hikers negotiate two saddles on route to Sleepkloof hut. Most of the day passes through pristine mountain fynbos where many interesting species occur. Splendid Pass is such an example, named after the beautiful *Mimetes splendidus*. The wet indigenous forest at Mostertsbos is a stark contrast from the open mountain slopes. The crossing of the Witteklip River marks the day's half-way point and the second saddle's ascent begins shortly thereafter. The view from the top of Nademaalsnek is a just reward. The spectacular Storms River gorge, Sleepkloof hut and the final two-kilometre indigenous forest stretch are both visible from that point. Sleepkloof hut nestles on the slopes of a densely forested gorge where wood was dragged out during the woodcutter era. The hut has magnificent views of the Tsitsikamma mountains lurking in the distance.

Day 6: Sleepkloof Hut - Paul Sauer Bridge: (3,2km +/- 1 hour OR Storms River Village: 5,5km +/- 2 hours)



The final day provides hikers with the option of either finishing at Paul Sauer Bridge or Storms River Village. Both route's share the first kilometre's walk through dense forest pioneer vegetation. The shorter route to Paul Sauer Bridge is a very easy two kilometre descent through forest pioneer species and fynbos. The slightly longer walk to Storms River Village takes one through tall indigenous forest. This second option forms part of the Plaatbos Forest and joins up with other existing day walks in the area.

EQUIPMENT PORTERAGE INFORMATION:



Location:

The trail's starting point is in the Devasselot Restcamp of Tsitsikamma National Park which is situated in Nature's Valley. This can be easily found by traveling along the R102, - follow the clearly marked signposts to Nature's Valley from the N2. If approaching from the west (Plettenberg Bay side), the Nature's Valley turn-off will be to your right a short distance after the Kurland Estate entrance. If approaching from the east (Storms River Village), the Nature's valley turn-off will be to the left immediately after going through the N2 toll-gate. The Devasselot Restcamp is situated adjacent to the R102 and is clearly marked with large green and yellow signage.

Directions to any of the other four trail starting points can be easily obtained through contacting the MTO Ecotourism office in George or Tsitsikamma.

The Tsitsikamma Trail porterage team will meet your group at any of these starting points, and a brief talk with regard to safety, river-crossings, porterage procedures and so forth will then take place.

Porterage procedures:

* Hikers are requested to leave their backpacks inside the overnight hut and to ensure that all doors and windows are closed on departure.

* Backpacks will be placed inside overnight huts on drop-off by MTO Ecotourism staff.

* Please ensure that your backpack has a rain-proof cover/ black plastic bag to provide waterproofing during heavy rainfall. (We have waterproof covers for the vehicles, but need to ferry the equipment short distances between vehicles and overnight huts on foot, - therefore this is merely an extra precaution against a little extra dampness).

* The collection time for equipment and backpacks will be between 07h30 and 12h30. Backpacks and equipment are safe provided they are left inside the overnight huts. Baboons will investigate otherwise.

* Please try to arrive before 17h00 at the Devasselot Restcamp. Not only is it preferential to hike to Kalander Hut during daylight hours, - sufficient time is also required for the preparation talk; loading and sorting of equipment and transport of equipment to Kalander Hut.

* Hikers are requested to carry emergency rations and warm, waterproof protective gear, in case an unforeseen emergency arises. (These rations should be for a minimum of two days). We will contact you a few days prior to your arrival in this regard, but should you wish to communicate with us earlier, please contact Graeme Pienaar on either:

Tel: 042 2811 712

Cell: 072 70 45640

E-mail: gpienaar@cyberperk.co.za

Food and drinks:

We have refrigeration and freezer storage capacity at the Lottering Forestry Station. Your group is therefore welcome to bring along foodstuffs and drinks requiring freezing or refrigeration during your journey in the mountains. This allows the luxury of bringing meats, vegetables, cheeses and a variety of drinks and so on.

Please place the different food/ drink items for each different night in separate containers/ cooler boxes before handing the items over to us. Please ensure that each different container is clearly marked with regard to when required on which particular evening/ day.

Please remember to purchase all food and general hiking supplies prior to your arrival at Nature's Valley, as the local shop only stocks basic supplies.

Limitations on baggage amounts:

- We request that each hiker bring only one **unit** per person. A backpack, suitcase or kit-bag should suffice in this regard.
- Hiker groups are allowed cooler boxes or containers additional to the above-mentioned items for food, cooking, cutlery and beverage transportation, - but please bear in mind that only one standard bakkie transports these items and large groups (12 + people), are requested to share **units** with regard to clothing and sleeping gear.

- Due to time constraints the transport vehicle can only ferry equipment between huts once per group, and we therefore request that you plan in advance with regard to the amount of gear your particular group brings along on the trail.
- If you can place the food items and drinks required for each night into clearly marked separate containers/ cooler boxes, – this will facilitate the storage and transport process tremendously.
- Please try to limit the number of loose items, - not only does this assist us with general loading and transport, but it also decreases the chance of any items going missing.

Here is an example of equipment transport for a group of 20 people:

- 20 units for the group. Each unit consists of an individuals clothing, sleeping gear, toiletries and basic hiking equipment such as gas stoves, flasks, etc.
- 5 cooler/ container boxes: These contain the food and drinks for the group. (Each box has been clearly marked with regard to which day required).
- An additional carry-bag containing the group's cutlery, crockery and other cooking items.
- Remember that each hiker should carry a daypack containing food and drink, for the day's walk. Warm, waterproof gear should also be in the daypack. Binoculars, field guides and cameras can be carried by stronger group members and are recommended.
- First-aid supplies and emergency rations should be carried by some members of the party in case an unforeseen emergency arises. This is mainly a precaution in case a party becomes stranded between swollen rivers during heavy rainfall. This is applicable to the Bloukrans – Keurbos and Keurbos – Heuningbos Hut sections of the trail. Detailed safety precaution information with regard to heavy rainfall and river crossings will be conveyed to hikers prior to beginning the trail.

Tariffs:

Our tariffs are R65,00 per person per day for overnighing at any of the five huts. (There are special rates for group and school bookings during off-peak times as well).

A day hike along the Tsitsikamma Trail without overnighing will cost R20,00 per person per day. Should you wish your groups' equipment to be transported between overnight huts the cost will be R400,00 per hut for the first 6 people; R500,00 for 7 – 12 people, with an additional R35,00 per person thereafter. If you would like to drive to certain huts yourself, the cost will be R200,00 per hut. Guided day walks will be R500,00 during the week and R650 over weekends per 15 people, with an additional R20,00 per person thereafter. (It is essential that reservations for guided day hikes must be made at least two weeks in advance).

New activities now available along the trail include the following:

- **Equipment and backpack portorage:** You can have all your kit transported between overnight huts, while you carry only the essentials during the day.
- **Informative, guided hiking excursions** unearth many forest and fynbos secrets.
- **Exciting and flexible mountain biking** with equipment portorage options.
- **Tsitsikamma mountain experience:** Vehicular access to Blaauwkrantz, Keurbos and Heuningbos huts for 4x4 and 4x2 enthusiasts. (Such bookings will not coincide with normal hiker bookings at overnight stops).
- **Other possibilities** include the transport of groups to overnight huts without their participants hiking between huts.

Contact details:

For reservations and enquiries please contact:

MTO Ecotourism, George booking office: Tel - 044 874 4363

Fax - 044 874 6397

e-mail: ivy@cyberperk.co.za

For enquiries only, please contact:

MTO Ecotourism

The Ecotourism Manager - Tsitsikamma region

042 2811 712 (telephone)

072 70 45640 (cell-phone)

042 2811 778 (fax)

e-mail: gpienaar@cyberperk.co.za

Website: www.mtoecotourism.co.za

www.tsitsikamma.info