

Swarttobie

The Swarttobie Trail is about 4 hours from Cape Town. The trail is 42 km long over a period of 4 days. You average 10km of hiking along the coast a day, the hike takes you along a virtually unexplored stretch of the West Coast close to the farming community of Koekenaap.

The route curves through breathtaking nature scenes and follows through cliffs on the beaches of the West coast. A variety of birds can be seen, especially the Swarttobie. You'll walk through rustic remote and swathes of wild flowers and along beautiful and mostly inaccessible beaches, as well as experience fascinating coastal landforms. Part of the route takes you to a diamond mine not usually accessible to the public. This and the sheer beauty of the lonely coastline little explored by visitors and locals to the area, tidal pools filled with crayfish and mussels, and the chance to explore some of the most incredible rock formations make this hike not only one of the best kept secrets of the West Coast and a must-do.

Two- or four-day trails are available and a certain amount of experience is needed. If low tide falls over mid day – trail can be regarded as moderate. High tide at mid day changes difficulty to strenuous.

The trail is a backpacker trail, and you need to supply everything except water, and firewood. Your accommodation is rustic so bring all your creature comforts with - This trail should be regarded as a wilderness experience. Little or no facilities at overnight camps – it is advisable to take a spade for ablutions.

A series of different colour Swarttobie boards are used as indicators: halfway, lunch and overnight spots, ascend and descend, and interesting spots.



Arrival Day: Kliphuis

On the day of arrival you will spend your first night at Kliphuis. Drinking water and firewood will be provided.

Normally the hikers will have a braai at kliphuis on the first evening. You will find showers with a bit of warm water, depending on the weather that day, make use of the showers as you wouldn't see any of them for the next few days. There is no electricity at the cave so be sure to pack everything you might need. The next morning you park and leave your car for the duration of your hike at the owners' house which is about 4 km from Kliphuis where you spend the first and last nights.

Day 1: Spuitgat se Baai to Luck se Baai

The **8.8km** is not to be underestimated. You will need to watch the incoming tides as there are sections where you may be trapped by water, and low tide walking is a lot easier on the legs. There will be opportunities for swimming and crayfish (during season) and to view marine life.



Day 2: Luck se Baai to Camp David

The **9.38km** is a relaxed hike. Again you will need to watch the incoming tides. Closer to the mouth of the river the Swarttobie will be found in great numbers. At the mouth of the Olifants River a variety of wading birds can be seen. Overnight at Camp David.



Day 3: Camp David to Langklip

The **13.94km** is very strenuous. From Camp David walk upstream on the banks of the Olifants River and experience the different ecosystems between sea and land.



Dag 4: Langklip to Kliphuis.

The **9.56km** is a relaxed hike. From Langklip, walk upstream on the banks of the Olifants River. The trail will take you through a neighboring farm all the way to Boomhuis. This will be the lunch spot for the day.

Optional:

Boat trip available from Langklip to transport hikers to Kliphuis.

The rest of the day can be used to relax, for sightseeing or to visit the wine cellar at Strandfontein and Doringbaai.

The trail is finished with dinner at the owners house if the group is not too big.

Pertinent Information:

- Minimum 2 hiker's maximum 15 hikers
- Flower season middle August to end September
- Crayfish season – 15 November to April (PERMITS ESSENTIAL)
- Whale to be seen
- Bring your own cutlery, bedding, tents and mattresses
- The trail is closed from 23 December - 26 December.
- Distance from Gauteng – 1300 km, via Upington – 1600 km.

Additional information:

The Starting point of this trail is on a private farm near Koekenaap, approximately 10 km north of Lutzville. Traveling time from Cape Town, ± 4 hrs. Traveling by car from Jhb one can either take the N14 to Springbok and then on the N7. You can also travel on the N12 to Britstown, from there on dirt roads through the Karoo (Vosburg, Carnarvon, Williston, Calvinia, Niewoudsville, Vanrhynsdorp on to Vredendal and then to Lutzville.) Closest Airport is Cape Town, from here best would be to rent a car and travel to Koekenaap as there is no shuttle service and the owner said that bus and taxi services are unreliable.

You park and leave your cars for the duration of your hike at the owners' house which is about 4 km from Kliphuis where you spend the first and last nights. This is a well ventilated overnight cave next to the Olifants River. Here are showers with cold water (hot water on sunny days), flush toilets and braai facilities. There are 3 rooms (2 people per room) but most people opt to sleep in the cave. No mattresses provided.

The owner will transport you early on day one to the starting point and you then start hiking while tents etc will be taken to the overnight spot.

You supply your own food for the trail, except for the last night when the owners give a braai – you supply drinks, you can take cooler boxes for food. These packs will be taken each day with other baggage to overnight spots. Food can be frozen at the owner's and delivered to the overnight spot daily. Packs must be marked eg. Kruger DAY 1. You can also do some fishing – crayfish season starts mid November but be sure to get permits for this.

You carry a day pack with sufficient water and snacks, binoculars or whatever else. All other baggage transported by owner to the next overnight spot. You have to take own tents, camp chairs, small table for working surface, if you want to camp shower, roll up mattresses etc. The overnight spots are very basic, fresh water, wood and grid supplied. Please note that the camping spots must be regarded as wilderness – no ablutions provided. PLEASE SUPPLY OWN BLITZ/FIRE LIGHTERS. Also remember mosquito repellent and a dry mac.

One Venter trailer or similar per group allowed – NO big 4×4 trailers with tent/kitchen/bathroom please. Baggage collected around 9 am. It is advised that you do not start hiking later than 9 O'clock.

There is no map of the hiking trail itself. You follow the coast and on days 1 and if needed day 2 or 3 when terrain becomes difficult and trail moves a little inland, a guide hikes with you. On these days he will also take you to fossil sites.

Please note:

15KG per person max to be transported. Please put all food to be frozen in one pack per day for the group and mark with group name and day. Only frozen stuff please, no refrigerator space available. Dry food may be packed in crates and marked same as frozen food.