



Eastern Cape

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Veld to Fork (p220)
- ➔ Hazel's Organic Restaurant (p189)
- ➔ Stanley St (p184)
- ➔ Haricot's Deli & Bistro (p194)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Bulungula Lodge (p210)
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- ➔ Die Tuishuise & Victoria Manor (p225)
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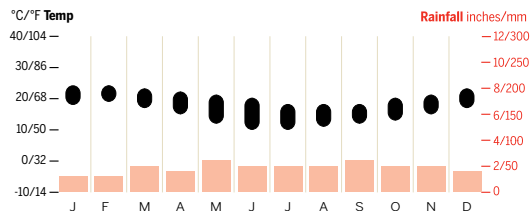
Why Go?

From lush tropical forests to uninhabited desert expanses, from easygoing hammock time to adrenaline-pumping adventures, the Eastern Cape offers a wide range of topography and experiences. Compared with the wealthier and more developed Western Cape, it can feel like a different country and provides opportunities to learn about Xhosa culture. Some of South Africa's finest hiking (and slackpacking) trails wind along the province's stunning coastline and through its mountainous, waterfall-filled landscapes.

Private wildlife reserves and national and regional parks abound; see the Big Five (lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant and rhino) or migrating whale and dolphins. You'll find tranquillity and culture in the towns of the semiarid Karoo; the imposing Drakensberg peaks and little-known valleys in the Highlands; good surfing in the Indian Ocean, coupled with amazing cultural experiences on the Wild Coast; and history throughout, including the legacy of some famous local sons – Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Steve Biko.

When to Go

Port Elizabeth



Apr Between the summer rains and the winter chill; good wildlife watching and quiet beaches.


Jul Africa's largest arts festival in Grahamstown and a world surfing competition in Jeffrey's Bay.

Sep-Oct Spring wild flowers and bearable presummer heat in the Karoo, and Hogsback's Spring Festival.

Language

Start practising those tongue clicks – Xhosa is the predominant language in the Eastern Cape. Local whites speak English and Afrikaans.

Getting There & Around

The easiest way to explore the province is by car, but backpacker shuttle the **Baz Bus** ( 0861 229 287; www.bazbus.com) is a good option for touring the coast. It runs between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth (R2020 one way hop-on, hop-off; 15 hours) five days a week in both directions, stopping at backpackers in the Craggs (near Nature's Valley), Bloukrans Bridge, Storms River and Jeffrey's Bay. Baz Bus also runs between Port Elizabeth and Durban (R1830 one way hop-on, hop-off; 15½ hours) four days a week, stopping in Port Alfred, East London, Chintsa and Mthatha. Seven- to 21-day passes are also available. Backpackers run shuttles from East London to Hogsback, and from Mthatha to Coffee Bay and Port St Johns.

The major bus companies, including **Greyhound** ( in Jo'burg 011-611 8000; www.greyhound.co.za), **Translux** (City to City;  0861 589 282; www.translux.co.za), **Intercape** ( in Cape Town 021-380 4400; www.intercape.co.za) and **City to City** ( 0861 589 282; www.cityto.city.co.za), ply the same coastal route and also serve the hinterland, linking the Eastern Cape with Bloemfontein, Johannesburg (Jo'burg) and Pretoria. **Shosholozameyl** ( 0860 008 888; www.shosholozameyl.co.za) trains connect Port Elizabeth and East London with Jo'burg via Bloemfontein. Port Elizabeth, East London and Mthatha have airports.

Further off the beaten track, notably on the Wild Coast and in the Highlands, travellers on public transport will have to take shared taxis to reach more-obscure spots. Roads can be impassable after heavy rains. Some places on the Wild Coast are only accessible on foot or horseback.

GARDEN ROUTE EAST

This region includes the western edge of the Eastern Cape coast, an extension of the well-travelled Garden Route and, for that reason, is probably the most visited part of the province. Tsitsikamma National Park is deservedly well known but other lesser-known destinations such as Baviaanskloof Wilderness Area (p173) are also worthy of attention.


Nature's Valley

Nature's Valley is nestled in yellow-wood forest next to a magnificent beach and lagoon in the west of Tsitsikamma National Park.






This is where the 46km Otter Trail (p170) ends and the 60km Tsitsikamma Mountain Trail (p171) begins. There are also plenty of shorter hikes in this part of the park, which is referred to as the De Vasselot Section.

A range of accommodation options and eateries are found above the village, signposted from Rte 102 as it runs 9km down to Nature's Valley from the N2 near Kurland Village. After passing Nature's Valley, Rte 102 loops back to the N2, crossing it at the Tsitsikamma toll plaza, 14km east of Kurland Village.

Sleeping





Nature's Valley Properties ( 082 772 2972; www.naturesvalleyproperties.co.za/accommodation) lists self-catering accommodation on its website.

Rocky Road

 044-534 8148; www.rockyroadbackpackers.com; Loreda South; dm R120, safari tent s/d R190/280;     Rocky Road is like an enchanted clearing in the wood. Swing chairs, a donkey-boiler Jacuzzi (fired up on Fridays) and magical bathrooms are scattered on the fringes of indigenous forest. Walking trails lead through the trees, and accommodation options include comfortable safari tents and cabins with adjoining bathrooms. It is signposted from Rte 102 about 1km from the N2.




BACKPACKERS \$

Nature's Valley Guesthouse & Hikers Haven

 044-531 6805; www.hikershaven.co.za; 411 St Patrick's Ave; s/d incl breakfast R450/740, without bathroom R350/600;  closed Dec;   This thatched brick building has a big lawn, a self-catering kitchen, a lounge, and small, tidy rooms with outdated bathrooms. Transport to the start of the Otter Trail is offered (R480 for up to four people).


GUESTHOUSE \$

Tranquility Lodge

 044-531 6663; www.tranquilitylodge.co.za; 130 St Michael's Ave; s/d incl breakfast from R590/980;   Soundtracked by a trickling fountain and the roaring waves, Tranquility has seven rooms decked out with beach-house furniture, African art and surf trimmings. Guests get free kayaks for the lagoon and discounts on local activities.

LODGE \$\$

Nature's Valley Rest Camp

 044-531 6700; www.sanparks.org; camping R190, chalets R900) The national park campsite is a lovely spot at the edge of the river east of

CAMPGROUND \$\$