

Berg-en-Dal Rest Camp, Kruger National Park

Access for Guests with Mobility challenges

Berg-en-Dal is in the scenically attractive south-western hills of the park. It is best accessed through the Malelane Gate some 12 km away which is the second closest Kruger gate to Gauteng (Johannesburg and Pretoria). At Malelane Gate there are accessible ablutions, but a large step into the reception offices! Game viewing is excellent in the area. Rhino, leopard and wild dog are particularly regularly seen. It is a modern camp and generally the access is great.



On arriving at the camp the parking area at the main reception/restaurant/shop complex has no designated wheelchair bays, but a suitable location can usually be found with sufficient space to disembark. The entire camp is bricked (apart from the tar entrance road) and this means there is a suitable surface for wheelchair travel around the camp. All the main facilities are accessible lowered portion at the reception counter is a nice feature – the information centre/rhino exhibition hall adjacent the reception area is worth spending some time browsing the displays.



Reception Counter with lowered portion on right



The Rhino Hall

The camp's main feature is that it overlooks the Matjulu Dam. This is great for viewing wildlife and the whole frontage overlooking the dam is fully accessible, with many vantage points for watching the activity around the dam. This is also the starting point for "the rhino trail" which is an in-camp perimeter trail which has a guide rope and Braille notice-boards for visually impaired guests and is wheelchair accessible for a portion of its distance along the camp's fence bordering the dam, although a steep descent from the paved area in front of the restaurant and some wheelers may require assistance here or at the other exit point some 50m along the fence.





ACCESSIBLE ACCOMMODATION: There are three accommodation units with accessible adaptations out of 80 odd units in the camp. Of these three, two are 6-bed family cottages and one a 3-bed bungalow. There are also accessible ablutions in one of the three campsite ablutions, but there is only a bath and toilet with grab rails and not a roll-in shower.



Entrance to the accessible campsite ablutions



Campsite bath with grab rail

The two **family cottages** each sleep 6. These two units ablutions differ, with one having a roll-in shower, the other a bath with grab rails. The toilets are not adjacent a wall, so wall-to-ground rails have been provided. The basin vanity has great clearance underneath and the basin has push lever taps as depicted in the pictures below.



The family cottages have a choice of 2 entrances. One into the units' living rooms (with en suite open plan kitchens) has a sliding door and small ridge. The other entrance into the bedroom has a smooth ramp. The outside veranda/braai area offers good access. The dining table has good clearance and the braai can be accessed from the open side. A wide bricked pathway provides good access from the units' parking areas which have sufficient width. The drop-curb up onto pathway is a little steeper than the rest of the path, but should be OK

The layout of the main bedrooms of the family cottages is not the best due to its design. The main bedroom (double bed) has 2 doors – one leading to the outside (shown above), the other connecting it to the rest of the unit. The rooms' wardrobes are too close to the bed to be accessed by a wheelchair user. The second bedrooms (2 single beds) are better with the wardrobe on a free wall and easily accessible. The two remaining beds are bench beds in the units' lounges and are most suitable for young children.



The accessible family cottage kitchens have good and bad features. The pantry shelves are easy to access, and underneath the hotplates there is great clearance for wheelchair users' legs. However there are boards beneath the sinks that mean wheelchair users must park sideways in an uncomfortable manner to use the sink properly.



Good clearance below the hotplates and work surface



Board preventing access below the sink

Accessible Bungalow: For many years the only units accessible to people in wheelchairs that were available in Berg-en-Dal were the two 6 bed family cottages. These units are often too large and expensive for people with disabilities, particularly if they are traveling alone or with one or two companions. Since early 2009 however a 3-bed bungalow has been added to the accessible units in the camp and this unit is on the camp's fence line – ideal for watching passing wildlife. The unit has parking in front of the unit of the required width and the pathway is sufficiently wide, firm, smooth and even to allow for easy passage in a wheelchair.



Accessible bungalow depicting access path and parking

The unit's entrance has a gentle ramp up to the doorway and there is plenty of space on the veranda for a wheelchair user to access the outdoor table and braai area and the camp's fence line is a few metres in front of the unit and is regularly passed by animals (and other guests doing the camp's perimeter walk.)



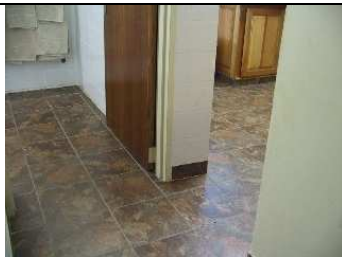
Inside the unit there is an open plan bedroom with 3 single beds in the chamber and this area is connected to a breakfast bar area that separates the living area from the kitchen. The unit's clothes cupboard is difficult to access in a wheelchair as the ends of the beds make opening of the cupboard doors tricky in a wheelchair. Inside the cupboard the hanging rail is too high for someone in a wheelchair to reach.



A difficult cupboard to access



The breakfast bar from the bedroom



The tight turn into the kitchen

A short passage way leads from the bedroom chamber to the ablutions. Midway along this is an open doorway into the kitchen. While the access into the bathroom is good, the turn into the kitchen is very tight and wheelchair users with long wheelchairs may have to reverse their way into the kitchen.

Once inside however the kitchen is very spacious and accessible. It is great to have hotplates and a work surface with clearance underneath and plugs that are easily reachable and while there isn't clearance beneath the sink, the sink does have push lever taps.



Work bench and hotplates with clearance underneath



The breakfast bar from the kitchen side

Like the Kitchen the Ablutions are very spacious. The toilet has grab rails in the appropriate position and the sink importantly is within reach of someone sitting on the toilet



	<p>The sink is easily reached with no impediments around it and the mirror is well positioned for wheelchair users and standing people alike. The basin is equipped with the necessary push taps.</p>
<p>The roll-in shower is the other feature of the ablutions. It is well laid out except that the 2 grab rails have been placed in the incorrect position. Hopefully these will be switched to their correct positions soon.</p>	
<p>Berg-en-Dal has conference and wedding facilities with indoor and outdoor sections all accessed by ramps and linked to the camps restaurant facilities, making them ideal for wheelchair patrons.</p>	
	
<p>There are accessible ablutions inside the conference facility. The grab rails for the toilet are appropriate, but the basin has a plank underneath it that prevents a person in a wheelchair from getting under the basin. This should be removed.</p>	
<p>Activities: Like all the main rest camps there is a swimming pool in camp, and although the access path and area around the pool make it easy to access in a wheelchair, for those who require it, there is no facility to enable wheelchair users to transfer between their chair and the pool.</p>	
	<p>Also like other camps the game drive vehicles have yet to be provided with accessible features and would-be patrons will need to be lifted between chair and vehicle and sit in the standard seats.</p>
<p>Facilities in the area around Berg-en-Dal: There is a hide at Gardenia Waterhole, but unlike some of the other hides in the park this one is not accessible. The tearoom/picnic site at Afsaal has an accessible toilet and the rest of the facility is easily accessed in a wheelchair, although the sand is very fine at the location so one must avoid some areas that are not cemented or firmed by trampling. One should also view the attractions near the nearby camps of Skukuza and Lower Sabie to see other wheelchair accessible attractions. The nearby Malelane Camp is one of the Park's oldest camps and has no accessible adaptations for its campsites or bungalows.</p>	