

Olifants Rest Camp, Kruger National Park

Access for Guests with Mobility challenges

Olifants Rest Camp is on a hill on the northern bank of the Olifants River and the view of the river and surrounding landscape lends itself to the camp's popularity. Elephant, Buffalo, Hippo and various antelope can usually be seen alongside various other wildlife. The camp is best reached via the Phalaborwa Gate some 83 km to the west, but entering at the Orpen Gate 102km to the south.



With Olifants being on a steep gradient, making one's way around camp in a wheelchair is not as easy as most of the other camps. The main facilities are however all equipped with the necessary ramps and are mostly easily accessed. The reception (right) has adequate open parking and a gentle ramp. There is an accessible unisex public toilet across the car-park above the restaurant/shop complex, which is equipped with a ramp (below left). The day visitor picnic site (below centre) has steps.



The highlight of Olifants is the river lookout (above right) and to get there is a wheelchair there is a choice of three pathways (shown below) which are all quite long and descend quite a way. Their respective gradients and smoothness of surface varies.



Accessible Accommodation in Olifants - Bungalow 76 (left) – for many years bungalow 76 was the only accessible accommodation unit at Olifants and for some inexplicable reason was fitted with a sunken bath with grab rails. Even for strong and mobile wheelchair users it was a challenge to use this facility which is in the centre of camp and has limited self catering facilities.

The good news is that during 2010 the camp finally removed the bath and replaced it with a roll-in shower (below centre). Unfortunately the contractor has put the supporting rails in the wrong place and the sliding pole for height adjusting the shower is positioned way too low, which will make it uncomfortable for standing persons who will still be the majority users of the unit. During the renovation they also retiled the unit and reattached the toilet grab rail (below left) in the incorrect position rendering it of little use. There is also no basin within reach of the toilet or a supporting rail at the rear of the toilet. Not a job well done, but still preferable to the sunken bath! One nice feature of the unit is the wardrobe, which has a hanging rail at a low (almost too low) level easy to reach for someone in a wheelchair.



The camp now has a second accessible bungalow – one of the highly desirable **river view unit** (bungalow 7), however this unit is also fraught with inappropriate facilities! The parking outside the unit is sufficiently flat and wide (below left) and the braai facility (below centre) adjacent the unit can also be accessed no problem. But the access ramp onto the unit's veranda (below right) is quite steep and the table on the veranda (which has good clearance beneath it) may have to be shifted to create room to pass.



The kitchenette facilities on the veranda are semi accessible. No clearance has been provided below the hotplates (far left) or the sink (left) as both have cupboards beneath them meaning a wheelchair user must position their chair sideways and stretch to use the facilities.

To access the bedroom chamber from the veranda a sliding door (below left) must be traversed. A small ridge at the base of the door frame may challenge some wheelers. Inside the chamber has 3 single beds (a third is to the right of the photo shown below) and the wardrobe (below right) is easy to access from a chair. There are remote controlled air-con and bedside light switches.



As is so often the case the biggest shortcoming of the unit is in its ablutions. The basin is in the bedroom chamber and has no push taps, the mirror is too high for wheelchair guests and there is no clearance beneath the basin for a wheelchair user's legs making it very difficult to use the basin. The toilet in the ablution chamber only has a grab rail on the adjacent wall (which is correctly positioned) and not one on the rear and there is no basin within reach of the toilet. Lastly the roll-in-shower has used a fold-down foot rest and not a seat of appropriate size to support the weight of a human wheelchair user. The only grab rail is one on an opposite wall that is too far for a person to reach and only serves as a towel rail. Hopefully this will get changed!



Accessible Activities and facilities close to Olifants: While most people elect to self drive, like all camps in Kruger, guests can go on park-run guided game drives, but at present their vehicles have no accessible enhancements. Nwamanzi Lookout is 9km from camp and is a flatish tarred area where visitors can disembark to enjoy a view of the river. Balule retFor other accessible tea-rooms, picnic sites, hides and attractions readers should check the profiles of nearby camps like Letaba and Satara as these are all within a short drive from Olifants.