

Tamboti Tented Camp – Access for Guests with Mobility Challenges

Tamboti is a charming satellite camp 4 km from Orpen Camp and Gate located on the south bank of the Timbavati River, which only flows above ground in the rainy season, but flows underground and has several perennial pools that attract wildlife. The area is outstanding for game viewing. It is a self catering camp and comprises of 30 safari tents (15 with 4 beds and 15 with 2 beds) with communal washing and ablution facilities and 10 'semi-luxury' safari tents equipped with ablutions and cooking and wash-up facilities. There are 3 accessible units with ramped entrance in the camp, one 2-bed and one 4-bed communal tents and one 3-bed equipped tent (2 beds and a sleeper couch). Note there are no other amenities at this camp. The nearest fuel and shop are at Orpen, while the nearest restaurant is at Satara (50 km away)

Visitors with reserved accommodation in Tamboti must first check in at the reception at Orpen Camp. Here there is a ramped entrance and a wheelchair ablution (where the grab rail on the adjacent wall needs repositioned!).



The 2 **accessible tents with communal ablutions** are identical except that one has 4 beds and the other only 2. There is a bit of soft sand to negotiate from the parking area in front of these units, but then the path is wide and bricked, while the access to the units' decks are ramped.



Although the beds are quite low in these units, there is plenty of space for manoeuvring inside of the tents.

Each unit has its own braai (barbecue) facility for cooking on an open fire. The ones in the accessible units have been made accessible from all sides



The communal washing up facility (with hot-plates for cooking) is located about 20m from the accessible units. There is a small step (about 5cm from the ground up to the paved area) caused by rainfall erosion, but most wheelchair users should be able to negotiate this with ease.

The communal ablution block where the wheelchair accessible toilet and shower is located is perhaps 30m from the units. The earth has been built up to the paved level where the heavy summer rains had created a step.



The toilet has an adjacent support rail and the basin (fitted with push taps) is located within reach of a person seated on the toilet. The mirror is also at a suitable height for wheelchair users.

The roll-in shower meets the basic requirements. Users may want to travel with an extra towel or waterproof seat to sit on as the fold down seat is made from heavy duty metal.





The **semi-luxury safari tents** are nicer and more private units, but they are naturally more expensive (about double the price of the communal units)

The ramp from the parking area is not too steep and the gravel from the parking to the ramp is compact, making mobility in a wheelchair easy. Heavy rain has meant a slight step from the gravel up to the concrete base of the unit. The braai (barbecue) facility is at the base of the ramp to the left of the image.



The unit's deck has a open plan kitchen and table all of which is easily accessible to a wheelchair user.

The deck also provides excellent views of the adjacent riverbed which hosts a steady stream of game that can be viewed from the comfort of the unit.



The door to the interior (left) is spring loaded to help keep out the monkeys and baboons. It is however wide enough for wheelchair passage. Inside the unit is less spacious than the communal tents. There is one double bed, with bedside cabinets and just enough space for a wheelchair to pass between the side of the bed and the wall of the tent. Much of the bedroom interior space is taken by the sleeper couch. (see below)



Baboons have proved to be a big problem at Tamboti and as a result all fridges are kept indoors and the units are provided with keys and locks. This creates a space issue as it is positioned in the passage from the bedroom to the bathroom. However there is just enough space to get past in a wheelchair to get to the bathroom (see above right)

The unit's ablutions are not well designed and there are several factors that are not in keeping with a properly accessible unit. The toilet itself is fine and is equipped with grab rails adjacent and behind the toilet, but the water basin is out of reach of a person sitting on the unit. The design of the basin is also not suited for a person in a wheelchair as they cannot position their chair underneath the basin. Also the taps are not suitable for persons with a cervical injury with limited hand control as there are standard turn taps. The taps are also positioned in a very awkward position for a person in a wheelchair. Then the position of the basin is in an awkward position in relation to the basin, being off to the side. This makes shaving or other acts of grooming ungainly for all occupants.



But the biggest problem with the unit's ablutions from an access perspective is with the roll-in shower. There is no step or curb into the shower cubicle, but there is no detachable handset on a height adjustable sliding pole, so a wheelchair user cannot position the spout at an appropriate position, nor remove the handset to properly wash the immobile parts of their body. There is no push style mixer for people with limited grasping ability to turn the flow on and off. Then there is no fixed fold down seat for transfer out of one's wheelchair when showering. I got round this failing by dragging one of the chairs from the deck into the shower, but this is far from ideal and the camp management needs to address these situations urgently. If the dry walls of the shower are not strong enough to support a shower seat and a person sitting on it then mobile shower seats should be provided.

