

Karoo Access Profile as at March 2011:

Karoo National Park is located immediately south west of the Karoo town of Beaufort West and is accessed directly off the N1. It is set in the nama-karoo biome (an arid semi-desert habitat) and has both expansive plains and mountainous terrain.



The park's main attractions are its amazing fossil record, spectacular scenery and diverse arid flora and fauna with several large herbivores including lion, buffalo, springbok and an attempt to recreate the extinct quagga (a sub-species of zebra with reduced stripes on its hind quarters).



Mobility challenged drivers will not have to leave their vehicles at the park's entrance gate as the gate attendant will process the entrance permit through one's vehicle window. From there visitors make their way either to the park's main camp complex, 6 km away to check into their accommodation, or go on one of the park's self drive routes (scenic or game orientated). There is also a 4x4 route, but such visitors also need to check in at reception.



Karoo National Park's entrance gate, rest camp and reception building

Karoo National Park currently has 3 accommodation units with access adaptations for guests with mobility challenges – 2 three-bed chalets and 1 six-bed guest cottage. It also has accessible communal ablutions in the camping site. (See accommodation profile later in document)

The parking at the park's main complex is open plan and on a slight slope. The park does plan to designate a wheelchair parking with sufficient width on level ground. There is a ridge at the entrance into the reception facility which some wheelchair users may not be able to negotiate without assistance. Inside the reception counter is all one level and there is not currently a lowered section for wheelchair guests.



Parking, reception entrance and reception desk

There are accessible public toilets at the main reception/restaurant complex, which meet the required standards.



Accessible public ablution and baby changer at park's main complex

Inside the building the reception area, shop and meeting hall/audiovisual room are all easily accessible. The restaurant is accessed via a very steep ramp and assistance will be required to negotiate this.



Accessibility within the main complex building

Outdoor activities:

The park's main activity is self drive game drives. Since the reintroduction of lion in 2010 the self guided walks have been curtailed, but are still offered on a guided basis. However these are not appropriate for the mobility impaired, but there is a wheelchair accessible fossil trail in the main rest camp ...



Wheelchair accessible FOSSIL Trail

and the museum and information centre at Ou Skuur is accessed via a boardwalk alongside a dry river bed and then via a paved pathway. This exhibition gives visitors an insight into both the biological and cultural history of the park



Access to and in the Ou Skuur Info Centre

The picnic site and swimming pool at Bulkraal day visitor centre does not currently have any access adaptations, but is on flat ground. A bird hide near the main camp is not an accessible option.



Bulkraal Day Visitor Centre

ACCESSIBLE ACCOMMODATION:

Accessible Chalets: The 2 three-bed accessible chalets' parking are relatively accessible. The parking area is flat and there is sufficient width for wheelchair users to move to and from their vehicle. There are some pillars flanking the parking zone which will need to be avoided when parking to insure they don't interfere with the open door where a wheelchair user must disembark. The pathway from the parking to the units is a little uneven and steep in places, but once one gets to the unit it becomes smoother and a support rail is provided to prevent anyone going over the side of the ramp.



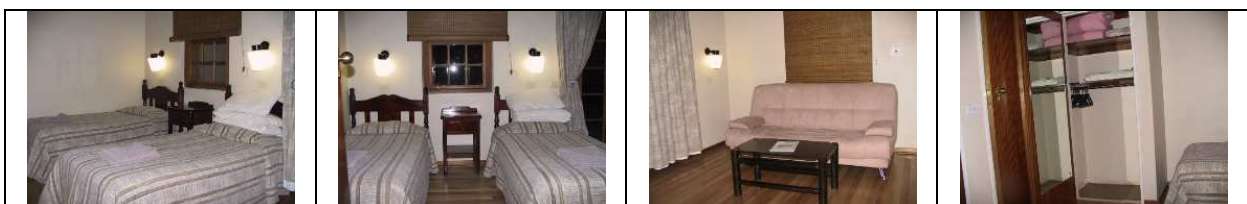
Karoo Accessible Chalets parking and access path

The veranda is flat and spacious and a rail provides safety for those admiring the view. The fold down braai is relatively accessible to use from a wheelchair. There is a ridge to get into the units' interiors which may challenge some in entering the unit which is done via a sliding door that does open a sufficient distance to accommodate wheelchair passage.



Karoo Accessible Chalet - veranda

The open plan living area/bedroom area has 2 single beds, a sleeper couch and a wardrobe. All are fairly easy to access from a wheelchair.



Karoo Accessible Chalet – bedroom chamber

The kitchen is an open plan extension of the bedroom chamber and it does not have any adaptations for guests in wheelchairs such as clearance below the sink and hot plates. It is also somewhat cramped but there is space to manoeuvre alongside these facilities and the fridge can be accessed easily. The eating

bar is a little high for a person in a chair and perhaps when these units are next subject to refurbishment the kitchen can be adapted to be more accessible to guests in wheelchairs.



Accessible Chalet kitchen.

Accessible Chalet Ablutions: In the units' en suite ablutions there is a roll-in shower which although the fold down shower seat is an old design and no longer suitable compared to some of the latest products available, it is still an adequate surface size and most wheelchair users should be able to use the facility. The seat is a metal one and using a shower cushion or folded up towel is recommended to provide the necessary safety padding. The shower is detachable and can be adjusted in height for wheelchair users or their able-bodied travel companions. The units also have toilets with grab rails with sufficient space alongside to accommodate those requiring assistance during transfer. The basin has sufficient clearance and is fitted with lever taps. It is on the outer limits of being able to be reached by someone using the toilet, but otherwise most wheelchair users should find the ablutions suitable. The mirror could be tilted to be adjustable for people at a lower level.



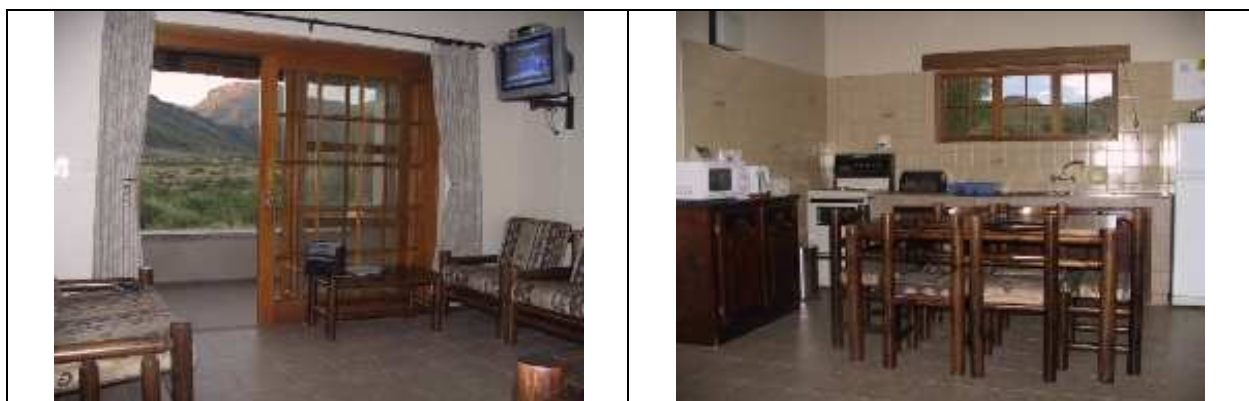
Accessible Chalet ablutions

Accessible Guest Cottage: The accessible guest cottage has a similar parking set-up to the chalets, but the access path to the unit is much more accessible and the ridge into the unit is much more negotiable. The unit's veranda is a spacious flat area and entrance into the building and access to the fold down braai are both easily achieved in a wheelchair.



Karoo Accessible Guest Cottage exterior

Inside the unit's open plan lounge/kitchen/dining area some furniture may need to be rearranged to provide seamless wheelchair access, but this is easily achieved. The same arrangement of chairs applies to the dining table. This table aside there the kitchen is relatively accessible although there is no clearance under the sink or stove.



The open plan lounge/dining/kitchen living space

There are 2 bedroom chambers, both with accessible adaptations in their en suite ablutions, which are an inverse of each other. The bedrooms both have 3 single beds. Like the lounge furniture, the beds can be easily shifted when guests using the unit are in wheelchairs to place them in the most appropriate positions. Both bedrooms have an easily accessed full length mirror which is a refreshing feature and one of the single beds in each chamber is alongside a make-up station with adequate clearance beneath it to accommodate a wheelchair. This also makes a great work space for a laptop.



Bedroom East showing beds, mirror and make-up station.



Bedroom West showing beds and make-up station.

Guest Cottage ABLUTIONS: In the identical but inverse accessible en suite bathrooms, the basin set-up meets the necessary access specs with good clearance, lever taps and a well appointed mirror. The toilets have good and bad points in terms of their access. There is sufficient space alongside the toilets for a person to transfer or be transferred to and from the toilet. The rear grab rail is positioned correctly, but the adjacent one is positioned too far forward and the park management has been encouraged to shift it closer to the toilet to meet the required specs. There is also no basin or water supply within reach of someone using the toilet. However the ablutions' main shortcoming is the baths ... presently the units only have baths with grab rails. This will prevent many mobility challenges guests from using a facility that is designed with the intention of being accessible because they will not have the necessary strength to transfer to and from their wheelchairs into the bath. The park management has been encouraged to remove at least one of the baths and to replace it with a roll-in shower built to the correct specifications. Alternatively they have been given an option to add a fold down seat at the head of the bath and to insert a sliding height adjustable detachable shower on the wall to allow wheelchair users to transfer onto this seat and use the facility as a shower. Until the recommendations are realized the bath is also hampered for those strong enough to transfer into it because the grab rail is positioned too far forward



Bathroom East showing basin, toilet and bath



Bathroom West showing basin, toilet and bath

Campsite Accessibility: The park's campsite is generally adequately accessible. The designated area is all flat and while the sites are grassed, there is a concrete road that will facilitate movement from a site to the ablutions. There is a separate unisex accessible ablution which has a wide and level concrete access path culminating in a shallow ramp into the chamber.



Karoo National Park Campsite

The ablutions have a toilet and basin that both meet the necessary specs for use and the basin is within reach of someone using the toilet which is always ideal. The roll-in shower is a little cramped being in a confined alcove. The toilet seat is an old design metal job and should be replaced with a more modern one meeting the size and composition requirements when next the park does maintenance to the facility.



Karoo National Park Campsite Ablutions