

## Namaqua National Park Access for Mobility Impaired Guests



**Namaqua National Park** is located up the West Coast of South Africa, approximately 500km north of Cape Town via the N7 that ultimately leads to Namibia. The park is a new and developing park and currently has limited visitor facilities. The park's main attraction is its carpets of Namaqualand Daisies in flower season (August/September). At this time people travel to the park in droves to witness this floral splendour.



But while the park's fame might revolve around the flowers, the park is also one of only two arid biodiversity hotspots and one of the few areas of where the succulent *Karoo* biome is under formal protection. There are also areas of the park that fall within the *fynbos* biome within the more mountainous areas of the park. The prime area for flowers (known as the *Skilpad* section) has now been combined with contractual land acquired from *De Beers Mining Company*. This means the park now includes land between the *Groen* and *Spoeg* Rivers and stretches all the way down to the rugged Atlantic Ocean with its bountiful ocean life. From a general access perspective many parts of the park are only accessible in a 4x4 vehicle, but the main flower section and the *Skilpad* Rest Camp can be accessed in a sedan via the town of *Kamieskroon*. The hills and mountains of the *Kamiesberg* Range contains 201 endemic species with 79 species confined to this small area.



Namaqua's rugged Atlantic coast



Antelope graze amongst the flowers



Klipspringer patrol rocky crags

Access to the park by car from *Kamieskroon* is achieved by following an adequately sign-posted gravel road. At most times of year the journey will be uninterrupted, but at select times of year there may be gates to open and close to keep livestock within certain areas, as per agreements with neighbouring landowners. Apart from the soft sandy surface of the area's ground there are also cattle grids to cross to complete this process. Instances where wheelchair users are travelling alone may be rare, but they may not be able to achieve this task and cell phone reception is not reliable. The main reception block is only a couple of km away, so if a gate can only be opened and not closed, a staff member can be sent to help on arrival at reception. When one arrives at the *Skilpad* Office/Reception there is plenty of flat open ground for parking, so a dedicated wheelchair bay is not necessary. There is a steep ramp into the offices on the northern side of the parking, but the reception building is on the eastern side. There are a few small ridges

that need to be negotiated but otherwise the route is fairly accessible for wheelchair users

**ACCESSIBLE ABLUTIONS**



The reception offices and information centre also have public toilets, with one of them adapted to be accessible to guests in wheelchairs. There is a concrete path and a ramp that leads to this ablation block making it easy to navigate the sandy ground. The ablation is very spacious and there are grab rails behind and adjacent the toilet. The rail adjacent the toilet needs to be repositioned as it is not currently much use in its current position.

**Accessible Accommodation**



Skilpad Rest Camp Chalet 3

Skilpad Rest Camp consists of 4 chalets, each with 2 single beds in the bedroom and a ¾-sleeper couch (suitable for 1 adult or 2 children) in the open plan living room / kitchen and one of these chalets (unit #3) is equipped with ramps and adapted ablutions to accommodate guests in wheelchairs. A dining area is available on the enclosed veranda and an indoor fireplace and an outside braai area is also provided. The units come equipped with ceiling fans and 220V electricity. The kitchen is fully equipped with crockery and cutlery, cooking utensils, glassware, a 4-plate stove, microwave, fridge / freezer combo, kettle and toaster.



Although the designated accessible unit is relatively accommodating to guests in wheelchairs, there are a few areas of concern that need to be resolved and the park management has been briefed accordingly to address these issues. The first is at the entrance. The concrete ramp has eroded somewhat and there is now a ridge to negotiate. A more suitable ramped entrance needs to be provided.



On entering the unit one is now in the open plan kitchen/sitting room. The kitchen is spacious and relatively accessible without having any formal adaptations. There is no clearance below the sink and the tap is a twist style one. All the cupboards are a low level and the fridge and the stove/oven can be accessed fairly easily.



From the kitchen a person can either move into a sitting area (there is a sleeper couch, and arm chair and DSTV), or go into the ablutions or the bedroom chamber. Both the sitting area and the bedroom chamber lead out (separately) onto an enclosed veranda and both have a 10cm step down to that level. This is unacceptable in a facility intended to be for use by guests with mobility impairment and if permanent ramps are not inserted acquiring a portable ramp that can also be

used at the front entrance is a viable solution.



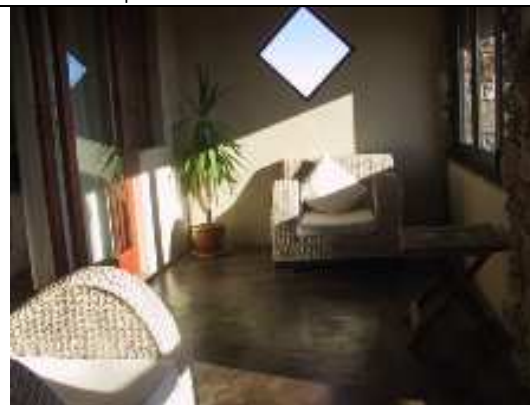
Step from veranda into TV Room/Kitchen Area



Step from veranda into bedroom chamber



The dining area is currently difficult to access in a unit that is intended to be universally accessible

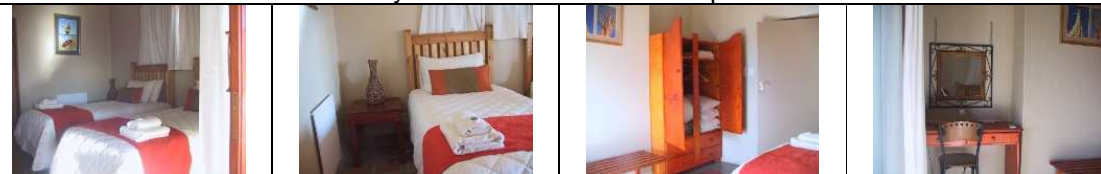


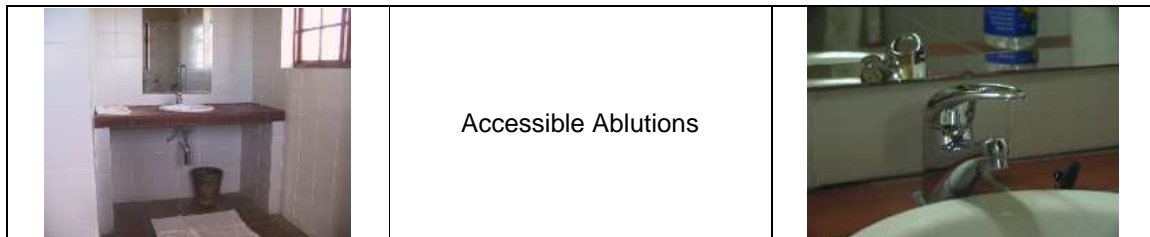
Armchairs on the enclosed veranda. This and the external access down to the braai are also difficult to access.

While the access to the veranda is compromised by steps, the access to the bedroom chamber and ablutions is compromised by a badly designed tight corner and a door stopper that prevents the bathroom door from opening fully. This means that a wheelchair user cannot move directly between bedroom and ablutions, but has to close the door and enter from the kitchen side. Removing this stopper will not be difficult and will improve the situation.



The bedroom chamber is accessible. There is sufficient space either side of the beds to accommodate wheelchairs. Beds are a good height for transfer and the bedside light is easily reached. The wardrobe is easily accessed and the make-up station has sufficient clearance





As with most accessible accommodation the ablutions is where most difficulties will occur. The basin set up is superb though with excellent clearance, a mirror accommodating people of various heights and a mixer easily used by people with limited grasping ability.

