

## Wilderness Section of Garden Route National Park - Access for the Mobility Impaired

The Wilderness Section of Garden Route National Park in the southern Cape encompasses a series of lakes, rivers, estuaries and beaches between the towns of Wilderness in the west and Sedgefield in the east. Some of the area is zoned for recreational activity, while other parts are restricted conservation areas.

### Ebb & Flow Rest Camp (South)

- is located just off the N2 in the east of the town of Wilderness. It has 34 accommodation units (20 forest huts, 5 family cottages and 9 log cottages) and 70 camping sites. 2 of the permanent units are constructed to be accessible or partially accessible to guests in wheelchair, and there are 2 accessible unisex ablutions in the camping area. A second camp north of the railway line called Ebb & Flow (North) has camping and hiking huts, but none of these are accessible for wheelchair users

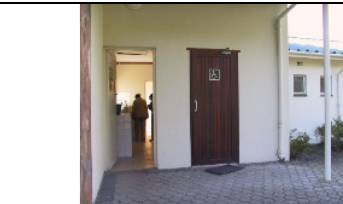


To enter into Ebb & Flow one must first press an intercom at an electric gate to gain access. Guests staying at the camp must check in at the reception office, which has good ramped access. The parking area is open with plenty of space for wheelchairs to disembark



**Accessible Accommodation:** Much of the accommodation is on stilts due to the periodic flooding of the camp, but 1 **forest hut** and **family cottage** are wheelchair accessible.

**Camping and Caravanning:** Guests camping make use of communal ablutions. There are now 2 separate unisex toilets for guests with mobility difficulties. The original accessible bathroom is next to the laundry, next to the Loerie's Nest meeting room. For wheelchair users the toilet is well set-up with grab rails well positioned and the basin within reach of the toilet. The roll-in shower also meets the requirements with well positioned grab rails, adjustable and detachable shower and a fold down seat.

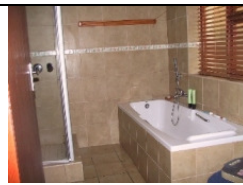
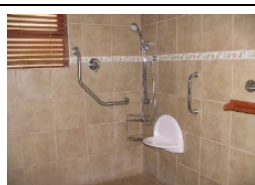
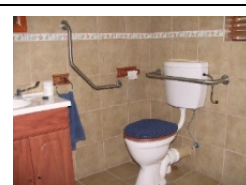
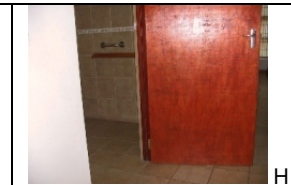
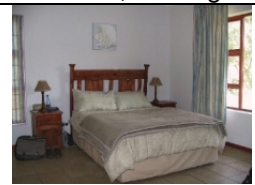


**Accessible Forest Hut:** All the forest huts are raised on stilts, but one has been fitted with a ramp to cater for wheelchair guests. The ramp is a little steep, so some wheelchair users may require a push. Inside the layout is basic but comfortable. There are 2 single beds on either side of the chamber, a table with fitted benches (wheelchair users will have to use the end of the table). The unit has an en-suite toilet, shower and basin, but only the basin is accessible to a wheelchair user. However the campsite ablution shown above is only 30m from the unit.

The **accessible family cottage** (right) sleeps 4 people. The parking space is sufficient, and the ramped access to the front of the unit good (A). The unit's veranda (B) is open and spacious, equipped with a table with bench seats and a braai. The entrance (C) has a slight ridge that may bother some people - the second half of the door can be opened to allow for wider wheelchairs. The unit's kitchen (D) is open plan, with the dining table and lounge, but no clearance has been provided, making the sink and hot-plates harder for wheelchair guests to use.



The lounge (E) has a fire-place, a chair and sofa, a coffee-table and DSTV. There is a choice of 2 bedrooms (F & G). There are also 2 bathrooms. The first has a widened door (H) for wheelchair users. This needs a grip handle provided near its apex to allow a wheelchair user to close it behind them. The toilet (I) has grab rails in the correct places, but the basin is just out of reach from the toilet. The roll-in shower (J) also has grab rails in the correct places and the sliding, detachable shower is well positioned. The problem is the fold-down seat is way too small for a person with no legs or leg control to balance on making it impossible to use – a wheelchair user will currently have to shower in their chair. The park urgently needs to replace this with a seat a more suitable size. As an alternative for those strong enough to transfer the bath (K) in the en-suite bathroom of the main bed-room is an alternative option for those who do not want to get their chair wet, although there are no grab rails provided.



**Park activities:** The lake area is mostly flat, so wheelchairs can cover some ground via the road network. There are a series of trails named after the kingfishers and mole-rats found in the area, but all these trails cover ground unsuitable for wheelchairs. One of the trails (Giant Kingfisher Trail) has a board-walk to a waterfall, but there are steps along the way. One of the main attractions of Wilderness is to hire a canoe and paddle the lengths of the accessible lakes and rivers. Wheelchair users will require assistance to transfer into the canoes and may want to take their own pillows to provide padding for their spine and bottom. There are also 2 bird hides, but these are inaccessible without help due to narrow sandy pathways and in one case the crossing of a railway. Hopefully in the future the barriers will be compensated for and the park will become much more accessible to guests in wheelchairs. In Ebb & Flow (South) Rest Camp itself there is an information centre which is fitted with a ramp for visitors in wheelchair.