

## The Tourist Route

### **RULES AND REGULATIONS**

- You may not get out of your vehicle whilst driving the tourist route. (Except at Holhoek picnic area).
- You may not leave the tar road at any point (unless at Holhoek).
- The tourist route functions in a clockwise manner and is strictly a one-way route to ease drive on the left and official vehicles from the front (except for the short 2-way section between the T-junctions. (ONLY officials may move in the opposite direction).
- The reserve gates close at 18:00 pm. Please plan your trip appropriately in order to leave at the stipulated time. The Diepkloof tourist route gate closes at 16h00. You have to leave the Kareekloof entrance by 15h00 in order to have enough time to finish the whole 67km route.
- Conducting commercial activities is prohibited.
- Hunting, poisoning, chasing, catching or disturbing any living creature is prohibited.
- Disturbing or causing harm to or picking any form of vegetation is prohibited.
- Any form of fishing is prohibited.
- Feeding any living creature is prohibited.
- Being in possession of a firearm is prohibited.
- Removing any natural item (plant, rock, animal) from the reserve is prohibited.
- Littering or of any harmful objects or liquids is prohibited.
- Lighting of any fire (unless at a designated point) is prohibited.
- You may not introduce any wild or feral animal or any pet.
- Removal, modification, or causing damage to any cultural heritage site is prohibited.
- Parking a vehicle at any point other than a designated parking area is prohibited.
- Persons drinking excessive alcohol and causing any form of disturbance whatsoever will be escorted out the reserve immediately.
- Any person playing loud music will be escorted out the reserve immediately.

### **INTERPRETATIVE POINTS:**

The following information will aid in making your trip through the reserve more informative. The interpretive points are relevant to the numbers painted on the road surface.

#### **POINT 1: View point.**

Take note of the view to your left. The first infrastructure where you are is Kiepersol camp (thatched roofs). You can also see Diepkloof farm museum (thatch roofs and rust colour walls). You will also note the tar road you might have entered on if you came in Diepkloof gate. The closest dam visible is Evergreen dam and in the distance is Johannesburg. Please take a few minutes to read the rules and regulations.

#### **POINT 2: Black Eagle nesting site.**

The distribution of Black Eagles depends almost exclusively on availability of suitable location (cliffs) for its nest, as well as the availability of dassies which is the Black Eagles' favoured prey. Suikerbosrand was host to a permanent breeding pair. Their nest was to the right against the cliffs and was then thought to have moved to a ledge to the left, which is not visible from this point. The

pair has not been seen for a number of years, but it is hoped that they will return. Black eagles have a wingspan of 1.9 m and can weigh up to 6 kg.

### **POINT 3: Fire collar.**

The reason for so few trees on the Highveld is hot fires. Tree seedlings are very sensitive to fires and cannot survive the intense heat. Another factor is harsh winters and frost.

Tree seedlings therefore must grow in sheltered places (such as ravines and between rocks). You will notice that most trees grow in between rocks and old stone kraals. This phenomenon is termed a fire collar.

Aloes are adapted to survive in hot dry conditions and therefore prefer to grow on the northern slopes and western slopes. Aloes have a shallow root system and often occur on rock slabs where water cannot penetrate deep into the soil.

Water is stored in the plants' thick fleshy leaves. Aloe leaves have a wax covering and few stomata to limit evaporation (transpiration). Leaves are also arranged in a rosette shape allowing rainwater to be directed towards the roots to a maximum extent. The aloes are protected against utilization by bitter sap and thorns on the leaves, so they can retain their water resources, yet aloes are still utilized by game, baboons and birds, particularly in times of drought.

### **Point 4: Highest point on the reserve.**

The white beacon on your left is at 1 917 m above sea-level. This is not only the highest point on the reserve, but also the highest point on the Witwatersrand.

Vegetation on high lying areas is more unpalatable to animals as minerals are leached out of the soil because of drainage.

### **Point 5: Fire-breaks and fencing.**

Directly in front of you against the opposite hill you will see the boundary fence (which is a 2.3 m make sure of this game proof fence). The reserve has a circumference of 90 km with fire-breaks of approximately 60 m.

### **POINT 6: The diorama scene.**

On the left is the scene represented in the diorama which is depicted in the exhibition hall at the visitor centre.

### **POINT 7: Sedaven dam and watering points.**

There are several dams, windmills and springs from which the animals drink on the reserve. Many factors must be taken into consideration when positioning a water point on a reserve. Most watering points should be placed in sourveld(unpalatable areas) to ensure a wider distribution of game and prevent the deterioration of sweetveld(palatable areas).

Sedaven dam provides drinking water for a small group of families and a school outside the reserve as well as game on the reserve.

**POINT 8: Thornveld.**

There are two main thorn-tree species (Acacias) found on the reserve:

	<b><i>Sweet thorn (Acacia karoo)</i></b>	<b><i>Hook thorn (Acacia caffra)</i></b>
THORNS	Long and white	Small and curved
FLOWERS	Small golden yellow balls visible in summer	Long and creamy in colour

Acacia trees are highly palatable because of their pods and leaves (which have high moisture content). Another reason is the symbiotic relationship between *Rhizobium* bacteria and acacia tree. The result of which is that the acacia trees are rich in nitrogen. Why do acacia trees have thorns? Thorns are for protection against browsing game species.

Younger trees have many more thorns as they can be damaged or destroyed by over-utilization in comparison with larger trees.

**POINT 9: Aloe veld**

The mountain aloe (*Aloe marlothii*) is the prevalent aloe species to be seen in this region. It can grow up to 6 m tall and flowers from July to September. Flowers vary from orange-red to red in colour.

**POINT 10: Public road to Kareekloof.**

Kareekloof is closed until further notice.

**POINT 11: Stone kraal.**

The stone kraals you see here to the left are remains of old African settlements, belonging to the Bafokeng, the Sotho and Tswana speaking people of the southern Highveld. It is unlikely that all the settlements in the area were occupied simultaneously. The sites normally consisted of a large family unit, which included man, wife, children and extended family.

Kraals are usually found on an elevated area, in order to see people approaching from afar. These people kept cattle and goats. They also grew sorghum.

The Diepkloof farm museum exhibit (near the visitor centre) portrays settlement patterns in greater detail.

