

Active Escapes - PONDO-VOYAGER HIKING TRAIL

5 Night Hiking Trail: Wild Coast Casino – Mbotyi



The northern Pondoland region of the Wild Coast, stretching from the Mtamvuna River (Wild Coast Casino) down to the Mzimvubu River at Port St Johns, is of easier access to holiday makers coming from Gauteng or KwaZulu-Natal.

Our 5 day/5 night Pondo-Voyager starts at the Wild Coast Casino and finishes at Mbotyi.

Led by a local guide, trailists will be treated to warm amaXhosa hospitality at a village homestay in Xolobeni (near Nyameni) on the

first night of the trail. The second trail night is spent at a lodge on the gorgeous Mtentu estuary, before entering Mkambati Nature Reserve. This 7720-ha coastal reserve consists of expansive grasslands, indigenous forest patches and is flanked by the magnificent forested ravines of the Msikaba and Mtentu rivers. Hikers have a good chance of seeing large herds of grazing herbivores such as Eland, Red Hartebeest, Blue Wildebeest, Blesbuck and Zebra.

A number of streams run through the reserve with deep pools and cascading waterfalls inviting you to take a plunge. The Mkambati Falls, which drop down over an arced rock terrace into the ocean below, are one of the day's highlights.

Msikaba is the southern boundary of Mkambati reserve and the 3rd night of the trail is spent here in an East African style tented camp, nestled amongst the milkwoods overlooking the estuary. Canoes are available from the camp, and guests can finish the day with a sunset paddle up this pristine estuary –one of the deepest estuaries in South Africa.



The fourth day's hike takes you from Msikaba to Lumphuthana, passing the site of the fated Grosvenor shipwreck and the remnants of the pioneering attempts to recover her treasure. Overnighting at Lumphuthana tented camp, nestled behind the dunes, hikers can enjoy sundowners whilst watching the natural spray display that is created from waves crashing up against the flat rock shelf.



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The final day's hike from Lumphuthana to Mbotyi is the longest, but the renowned landmarks of Waterfall Bluff, Cathedral Rock and Mfhiho falls make for exciting exploration! Waterfall Bluff is an 80m high waterfall which plunges directly into the ocean, and the adventurous can follow the rocky ledge behind the falls. A dip in the crystal clear pools above the falls is a must for all. The hike finishes at Mbotyi where you can enjoy a final night of luxury offered by Mbotyi River Lodge.

Traversing some of the most rugged and pristine terrain of the Wild Coast, this hike provides an eclectic route for the interested traveller. The scenery is picturesque, wild and undulating. Settling into a homestay or two amongst the local people offers a unique and enlightening experience, whilst the stunning, isolated tented camps and lack of luxury on the final night, provides hikers with a rich mix of experience.

Hike Details – at a Glance

Trip Duration	5 Day/ 5 Night Trail
Daily Distances	Day 1: 14km Day 2: 12-14km Day 3: 15km Day 4: 16km Day 5: 18.5km
Trail Grading	
Physical Fitness	Grade 2-3 –easy gradient but some longer daily distances
Technicality	Grade 2 – little scrambling, some optional steep sections for look-out points & natural attractions
Trail Terrain	Coastal Trail – traversing grasslands with deep forest ravines & gorges, rocky headlands, sandy beaches & friendly Pondo-villages.
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Night in Village Home stays (traditional rondavel, mattress on floor with bedding & bucket bath) • 1 Night – Mtentu River Lodge • 2 Nights East African Style Tented Camps – twin bedded safari tents on wooden platforms under thatch boma's - with en suite ablutions & hot water gas shower. • 1 Night – Mbotyi River Lodge (hotel).
Logistic Support	<p><u>Partially-Catered Trail:</u> Catering provided by the village home stays, Mtentu Lodge & Mbotyi hotel. Semi-luxury tented camps are fully equipped for self-catering.</p> <p><u>Guiding & Portering:</u> Guided all the way. Porters can <i>potentially</i> be arranged for small groups on request but unfortunately it is not an easy hike to accommodate porters.</p>
Tour Highlights	Friendly amaXhosa hospitality, Mtentu Estuary, waterfalls & game viewing in Mkambati Reserve; sunset paddle up the Msikaba estuary & a visit to the Vulture Colony; excavation remains of treasure-seekers at Grosvenor, shipwrecks, golden miles of unspoilt beach, incredible



	spray display at Luphuthana, Waterfall Bluff, Cathedral Rock, Mfihlo Falls, natural swimming pools on the Mlambomkulu.
Other Activities	Canoeing at Msikaba Estuary (canoes available for hire from the camp), excellent rock & surf fishing, birding, ocean swimming & snorkelling opportunities
Fauna & Flora	The Pondoland Centre of Endemism is one of the most important centres of plant diversity & endemism in Africa with over 2 253 recorded flora species, 196 of which are endemic to the region.
Climate	Mild sub-tropical climate with small seasonal temperature variation. Summer months (Nov – Feb), avg max daily temperatures of around 27-29 °C, whilst winter months (June – Aug) avg 21 °C. Night temps seldom drops below 10°C in winter and average around 15°C in summer. Most rain is received from summer thunderstorms (avg of 150mm/month in Nov – Feb), whilst the driest months, June-Aug produce an average of 40mm/month.
Seasonality/ Best time of Yr	Due to its temperate climate, Pondoland is good for hiking all year round. Whilst summer days can be quite sweaty, a refreshing swim in the ocean or river enroute becomes all the more inviting. Summer rainfall is usually in the form of quick thundershowers which pass quickly. Summer is also best for birdlife. The mild weather, sunny days & low probability of rain during winter also make this an excellent time (& a welcome retreat from the biting cold of an interior winter). Spring & Autumn months generally combine the best of all conditions. <u>Availability:</u> This trail is easiest to organise <i>outside</i> of the peak school holiday periods. However, it may be possible to organise during less busy school holidays.
Group Size	Preferred minimum of 4 persons - maximum 14 persons per single transfer
2017 Price / PP	Price dependent on customised route / itinerary but indicative costing on a 5 Night / 5 Day Hike is as follows: 2 Persons: R5700/pp 3 Persons: R 5100/pp 4 - 5 Persons: R 4900/pp 6 - 7 Persons: R 4600/pp 8 -10 Persons: R 4400/pp 11 or more: R 4250/pp <u>Optional Extra's:</u> * Extra Days at Mbotyi Lodge can be arranged for approx R850 – R1000/pp DBB in Lagoon room (season dependent)



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Price above Includes

- **5 Nights Accom:**
 - 1 night in village based homestay with Dinner & Breakfast provided (Nyameni/Xolobeni)
 - 1 Night at Mtentu Lodge (with Dinner, breakfast & packed lunch)
 - 2 Nights (self-catering) in twin-bed tented camps (en suite bathrooms) (Msikaba & Lumphuthana)
 - 1 Night at Mbotyi River Lodge (DBB)
- **Hiking Guide** for entire hike: 5 hike days
- **Meals:** Breakfast, packed lunch & dinner from 1st night homestay & Mtentu. Dinner & breakfast from Mbotyi. ** Need to self-cater for the 2 nights in the tented camps
- **Transfers:** private transfer from Mbotyi –3hr transfer back to Port Edward/ Wild Coast Casino
- Canoes – available for hire (R50/per double canoe) at Msikaba Camp

PONDO VOYAGER: Standard 5 Day/5 Night Hike Itinerary
Port Edward – Mbotyi

Day 1: Guided Hike from Wild Coast Casino – Nyameni (14km)

Overnight: **Nyameni Village homestay** (simple dinner, breakfast & packed lunch provided)

Day 2: Guided hike from Nyameni – Mtentu Lodge. (12-14km)

Overnight: **Mtentu River Lodge** (breakfast, dinner & packed lunch)

Day 3: Mtentu – Msikaba (approx 12-15km)

Overnight: **Msikaba Tented Camp** (self-catering only)

Day 4: Msikaba – Lumphuthana (16km)

Overnight: **Lumphuthana Tented Camp** (self-catering only)

Day 5: Lumphuthana – Mbotyi (18km)

Overnight: **Mbotyi River Lodge** (Dinner & Breakfast)

Day 6: Transfer back to WC Casino via private Taxi Operator (approx 2.5-3hr transfer)



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