

## Agulhas National Park - Access for the Mobility Impaired Guests

Agulhas National Park was only proclaimed in 1999 and has undergone a decade or so of land acquisition, habitat recovery and consolidation. Many people are sadly unaware of the park's existence and yet, as the southernmost tip of the African continent and the official meeting place of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans this park has incredible interest. Add to this the fascinating history of the area, the abundant marine and coastal life and the botanically rich Agulhas Plain the park is full of compelling reasons to visit.



Cape Agulhas is approximately 230 km from Cape Town. It can be accessed via the N2 route, turning off at Caledon and passing through Bredasdorp when coming from the west. From the east, leave the N2 near Swellendam and pass through Bredasdorp to get to Cape Agulhas. The nearest towns are L'Agulhas and the fishing village of Struisbaai on the coast, and Elim and Bredasdorp inland, where visitors can experience local culture and cuisine.

Perhaps the primary attraction in the park is the **Southern Tip of Africa**, where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet. A new boardwalk (April 2010) now takes visitors from the parking area to the southernmost tip. A smooth, wide and firm surface is flanked on both sides by guide ropes, but there is no kick plate at the side to prevent front wheels of a wheelchair rolling off ... but as the walkway is sufficiently wide this shouldn't be a problem.



There are several widened passing points along the walkway, and 2 information boards to enlighten visitors, one on the different oceans, and the other on Great Sea-faring Explorers. At the tip itself the boardwalk widens significantly to cater for larger numbers of people (e.g. busloads). There is also a pale coloured plank that divides the dark planks of the rest of the structure in line with the compass point separating the 2 oceans, thus a person can stand with one foot (or wheel) on the side of each ocean. There is also a ramp off the platform onto the beach where people can make their way to the actual dividing plaque. The beach is a pebbled one, so progress in a chair is not easy.





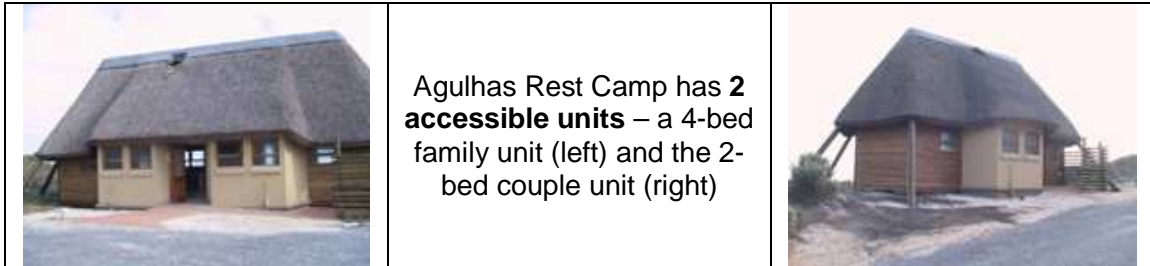
The **Agulhas Lighthouse** is another popular feature of the park. Currently the lower section of this national monument (1848) houses a lighthouse museum and a tea-room and small shop. In the near future the tea-room will be moved to a new building adjacent the lighthouse. This will also allow for the redesign of the entrance into the facility which is currently up a flight of steps. Access for visitors in wheelchairs is somewhat rudimentary, but nevertheless long metal runners are available and will be placed parallel to each other to accommodate such visitors. The gradient is however very steep and assistance will be required



**Accessible Accommodation:** Accommodation is a new addition to the park with a rest camp and 2 restored historic homesteads being completed before the end of 2010. There are 4 accessible units – one 2-bed chalet and one 4-bed at Agulhas Main Camp, one 2-bed cottage at Rhensoterkop and an accessible room at the restored Rietfontein Farmstead. **NB Photos shown here were taken during construction and updated photos are required.**

**Agulhas Rest Camp** is located a short distance west of the Southern Tip at a location known as Pietie-se-Punt, where an old historic homestead (now restored and used as accommodation) is located at the ocean's edge. 8 thatch units have been constructed on the dunes overlooking the location. Marine life (particularly whale sightings), intertidal pools and coastal *strandveld* are . There is a main reception building where one checks in. This building is mostly accessible and there is a universally accessible toilet at the facility.





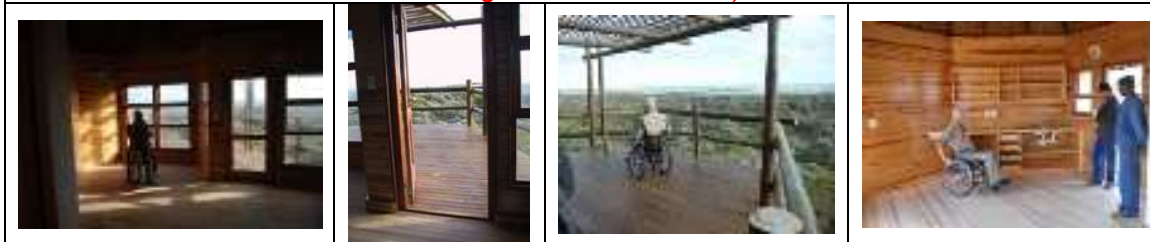
The entrances to both units are provided for by smooth wide bricked pathways. The 4-bed unit is a shallow gradient (below left), with the entrance to the 2-bed unit a little steeper (below centre). There is also a small ridge at the entrance to the 2-bed unit (below right) which may hinder some folk. *(alternate pictures to be supplied by park manager with improvement to entrance to 2-bed unit)*



In the **4-bed unit** the open plan kitchen/living area (once fully furnished) will be relatively accessible, although there is no clearance below the sink. *(Alternate pictures to be supplied by park manager of furnished unit)*. This central area leads onto a spacious balcony (below left) and into 2 bedroom chambers, one of which is equipped with accessible facilities. The access to the ablutions is narrower than is required (below centre left and right).



The interior layout of the **2-bed unit** also has a central open plan kitchen/living room area and this leads onto the balcony, where there is a small ridge to negotiate and into the bedroom chamber, where the gap left by the sliding door needs to be widened. The kitchen facilities are relatively accessible, *(Alternate pictures to be supplied by park manager of furnished unit)*.



The bedroom has the following concerns:

1. The unit's bedroom chamber will have an issue with the layout of the bed, so that

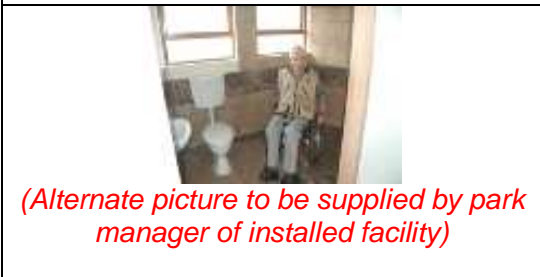
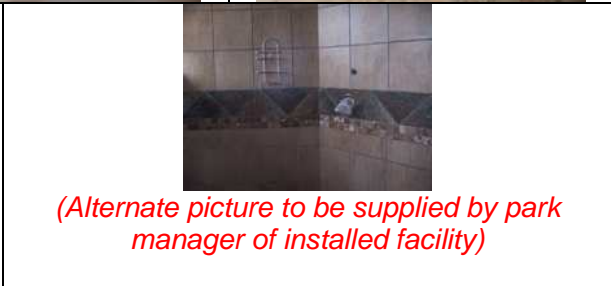
there is sufficient space alongside the right hand side of the bed to allow access for a wheelchair user to this side of the bed and the wardrobe

2. The shelf adjacent the wardrobe is too low and a wheelchair user cannot get underneath. (below left)
3. Access from the bedroom into the en suite ablutions is a much tighter width than required (below centre)
4. The width of the door from the living room is too narrow and needs to be widened (below right)

*(Alternate pictures to be supplied by park manager of furnished unit).*



Both units have a similar roll-in shower layout. As the walls of the shower are at an obtuse angle to each other, a hinged grab rail has had to be provided to enable guests in wheelchairs to use the facility.



The accessible toilets in both units are not adjacent a wall, but a basin vanity and open on the one side. While a rear grab rail is a standard requirement, a fold-down hinged grab rail or a standing one mounted to the floor will be required. The basin is in reach of the toilet.

**Rhenosterkop Camp** is a delightful camp located a few hundred metres inland from the coast. The original architecture has been retained. The accessible unit (right) is surrounded by a grove of milkwood trees



The parking area for the unit is appropriately flat and relatively firm. There is however a bit of sand and large stone gravel to cross and the concrete slab at the entrance has a small ridge to negotiate which may impair some people.



On entering the facility one is in a living space/open plan kitchen. Images of the empty space prior to being furnished are shown below. The unfurnished layout is relatively accessible, but once a fridge, dining room table, sleeper couch etc has been added, the accessibility of the spatial layout will have to be judged. *(Alternate pictures to be supplied by park manager of furnished unit).*



The kitchen/living area leads into the unit's bedroom chamber. It is somewhat cramped and the park will have to be clever with their furniture layout to allow a wheelchair user to move unimpeded through the room around the room and into the en suite bathroom on the other side. Both the doors of the chamber are extra wide one. The door from the kitchen currently opens inwards, which further compromises the available space of the chamber.



The unit's ablution is particularly spacious. The toilet is fitted with grab rails and its flusher is on the accessible side, while and the basin has push levers and the mirror is well positioned. The one criticism is that the basin is a fraction too far from the toilet to use with complete comfort

The unit's shower is wonderfully spacious with 2 transparent swing doors that open up to maximise the space. The roll-in shower's fold-up seat is of the appropriate size and the 2 support rails are well positioned. The mixer is a push style one and the only short-coming is that there is no detachable shower head on a height adjustable sliding pole, but only a standard fixed outlet point near the ceiling. *(Alternate pictures to be supplied by park manager of corrected shower)*



Rietfontein is an old historic farmstead that has been renovated for use by guests. There are 2 buildings, one with a row of 4 rooms with en suite ablutions, while the second building has had part of it converted into a conference venue/meeting room (that can comfortably seat up to 30 people), with en suite catering facilities and unisex ablutions, with one cubicle equipped with an accessible layout (right). There is an additional accommodation unit at the western end of this building. Unfortunately the first building was destroyed during a huge scrub fire during the early part of 2010 and the building (with similar layout) has to be rebuilt.



*Insert pictures of accessible unit, especially ablution facilities, when the facility has been restored.*