

Western Cape's off-the-beaten-track destinations that should be on your travel bucket list this summer

South Africans are embracing travel and getting out and about to satisfy their wanderlust. Covid-19 has changed the way people travel, with many looking for local adventures in off-the-beaten-track destinations - and the Bergrivier region, situated right on Cape Town's doorstep, certainly delivers.



Source: Supplied

The Bergrivier region is a beautiful area - known for its open spaces and dramatic landscapes - which is peppered with small towns that offer a vast array of activities and adventure options. The area also boasts some of the most pristine and untouched nature reserves, wetlands, lagoons, mountain landscapes and more.

For those looking to get out and about, Bergrivier Tourism has lined up a list of some of the top camping spots, hiking and mountain biking trails, 4x4 routes, watersports, bird watching and other must-do activities for this summer - and where to find them.

Velddrif

The hugely popular West Coast village of Velddrif hugs the banks of the beautiful Berg River just a few kilometers from where the river enters the ocean at St Helena Bay.

This lovely town is one of the most popular bird watching sites in South Africa with the tidal mudflats and salt marshes presenting more than 220 species of birds, including rare waders seldom seen elsewhere.



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Shellee-Kim Gold 20 Oct 2021



Top bird watching spots in the area include Rocher Pan, the historic Bokkomlaan, Rooibaaai and Laaiplek harbour. Take a cruise on one of the local boats and go further up the Berg River for the best bird watching experience.

Velddrif is perfectly located to offer a myriad of activities to water-sport enthusiasts with many options available such as canoeing and kayaking, boat trips on the Crackling Rosie, Knot Xtreme and Tollie's River Cruises, sailing with Port Owen Sailing Charters, surfing at Dwarskersbos, skiing, kite boarding, stand-up paddling in the river and so much more.

The Berg River is also a fishing hotspot and those in the know recommend casting your line at the train bridge - Carinus bridge - or at the Laaiplek harbour. For some surf fishing, try the Dwarskersbos beach by the Soverby Lapa. Velddrif also offers golf at the Bergrivier golf course and club which includes a popular driving range.

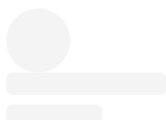
When it comes to camping, Velddrif has many options such as the Kliphoek Rivier Oord, Kuifkopvisvanger camp site, Knorvarkie, Happy Campers and the camp site in Dwarskersbos.

Piketberg

Piketberg, which is nestled at the foot of the Piketberg mountain range, draws visitors looking to enjoy - amongst many other things - the stunning natural surrounds and the abundant outdoor activities.

Amongst these is the newly developed hiking trail from Goedverwacht to Piket-Bo-Berg. For mountain bike enthusiasts, there is an excellent trail on the Retreat Guest Farm which can be arranged for day visitors.

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Kleine Paradys is well worth a visit and offers camping, canoeing, and fishing on a catch and release basis. Another recommended campsite is Kruistementlei in Piket-Bo-Berg.

For bird lovers, the nearby Verlorenvlei at Redelinghuys is an incredible spot. The vlei provides feeding, nesting and roosting sites for many bird species and waterbirds such as herons, egrets, ibises, spoonbills and flamingos. The Jakkalskloof 4x4 route in Redelinghuys is a great outing for 4x4 enthusiasts.



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For the adventurous keen to try their hand at paragliding, Piketberg offers a launching point in the Versfeld Pass on the way to Piket-Bo-Berg.

Piketberg also boasts game viewing at the Goudkop Bush and Detox Camp and golf at the PPC De Hoek Golf Course.

On the last Saturday of every month is the Piket-Bo-Berg Farmers Market which takes place on the Kruistementlei Farm in the mountains above Piketberg from 9am to 12pm.

This event has become an institution for locals and visitors alike - attracting foodies from as far afield as Cape Town who drive through to purchase the handcrafted items and farm fresh produce.

Porterville

Last but certainly not least on the list of highly recommended towns to visit this summer in pursuit of adventure is Porterville - a quaint village nestled on the slopes of the Olifants River mountains at the base of the Groot Winterhoek Wilderness Area.

Long known as the paragliding and hang gliding capital, outdoor enthusiasts are in for a treat with a visit to Porterville which offers a variety of hiking trails to fascinating destinations like De Hel (the hell) and De Tronk (the jail) in the Groot Winterhoek where impressive rock formations can be found.



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There is also an uphill waterfall trail at Waterval which is dotted with 22 waterfalls snaking their way down the mountainside, interspersed with crystal clear pools for a cooling dip.

For those keen to truly test their adrenalin levels, there are companies which offer tandem paragliding and hang gliding experiences off the Dasklip Pass and at Pampoenfontein. Bird watchers can also expect to find an abundance of feathered friends at Pampoenfontein, Beaverlac and in the Groot Winterhoek.

Those keen to throw in a line can opt for some fishing at the local municipal dam in Porterville as well as the privately owned dam on the Houdconstant Farm.

Golfers are not forgotten, and Porterville boasts a scenic golf course with a beautiful mountain backdrop. Every Saturday, visitors can also pop in at the Houdconstant Country Market which offers something for everyone, from delicious food to tractor and pony rides for the children.

Whether it is camping, bird watching, river cruising, canoeing, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, horse riding, paragliding or golfing - there are so many adventures to be had in the Bergrivier area that visitors are truly spoilt for choice, which is great news for people yearning to grab life with both hands.

All these towns promise a great escape for the entire family without huge crowds, meaning visitors can keep to Covid-19 distancing protocols as well.

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