

# KRUGER SELF-DRIVE Routes, Roads & Ratings



van den berg

pull-out  
map

the perfect drive-guide to the  
world's greatest eco-park...



## Routes

*Kruger Self-Drive, Routes, Roads and Ratings* suggests a selection of routes to take from every camp in the Kruger National Park to enhance your game drive experience.



## Roads

It is a comprehensive guide to all roads in the Park. The road descriptions feature a write-up of the vegetation, game viewing opportunities and history, as well as photographs taken on that specific road.



## Ratings

The book rates every single road in Kruger according to the probability of predator and antelope sightings, scenic beauty and birding opportunities.



## Animal, bird and tree guide

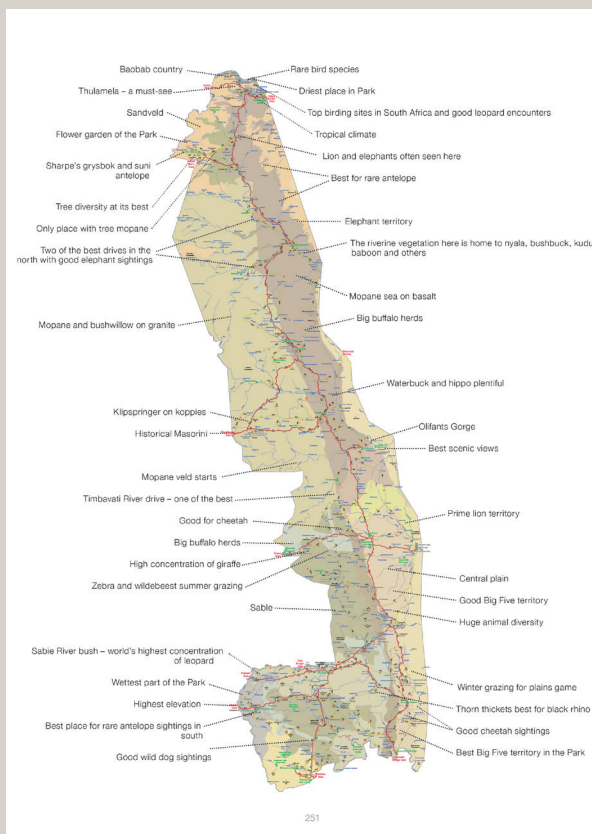
An appendix illustrates the most common mammals, reptiles, birds and plants found in the Park. It also illustrates the different ecozone of the Park.



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## Pull-out map

The book features a large pull-out map showing all the roads and routes of the Park.



## GAME VIEWING IN CAMPS - RATINGS

REST CAMP	SATELLITE BUSHCAMPS	Game viewing from the camp; - Scenic and tree spotting in camp	Birding in camp;
PUNDA MARIA		★★★★★	★★★★★
SHINGWEDZI		★★★★	★★★★
BATELUR		★★★★	★★★
SIRHENI		★★★	★★★★
MOPANI		★★★★	★★★★
BOULDERS		★★★	★★★
SHIMUWINI		★★★	★★★
LETABA		★★★★★	★★★★★
OLIFANTS		★★★★★	★★★★★
BAI LULE		★★★	★★★
SATARA		★★★★	★★★★
ROODEWAL		★★★★	★★★★
ORPEN		★★★★	★★★★
TAMBOTI		★★★★	★★★★
MAROELA		★★★★	★★★★
TALAMATI		★★★★	★★★★
SKUKUZA		★★★★★	★★★★★
LOWER SABIE		★★★★★	★★★★★
CROCODILE BRIDGE		★★★	★★★
BIYAMITI		★★★★	★★★★
PRETORIUSKOP		★★★★	★★★★
BERG-EN-DAL		★★★★	★★★★

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280 x 221 mm; 288 pages

all in full colour; hundreds of  
photos, maps, charts, routes

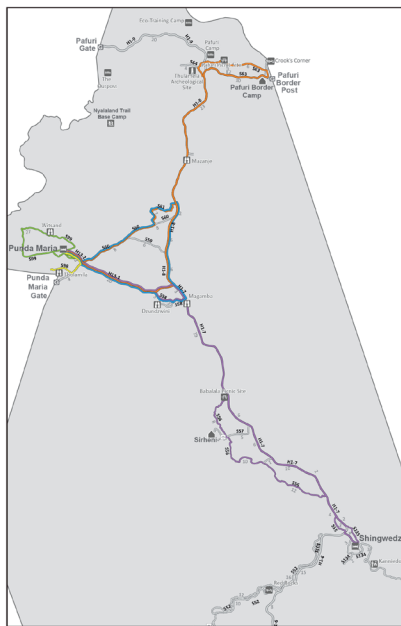
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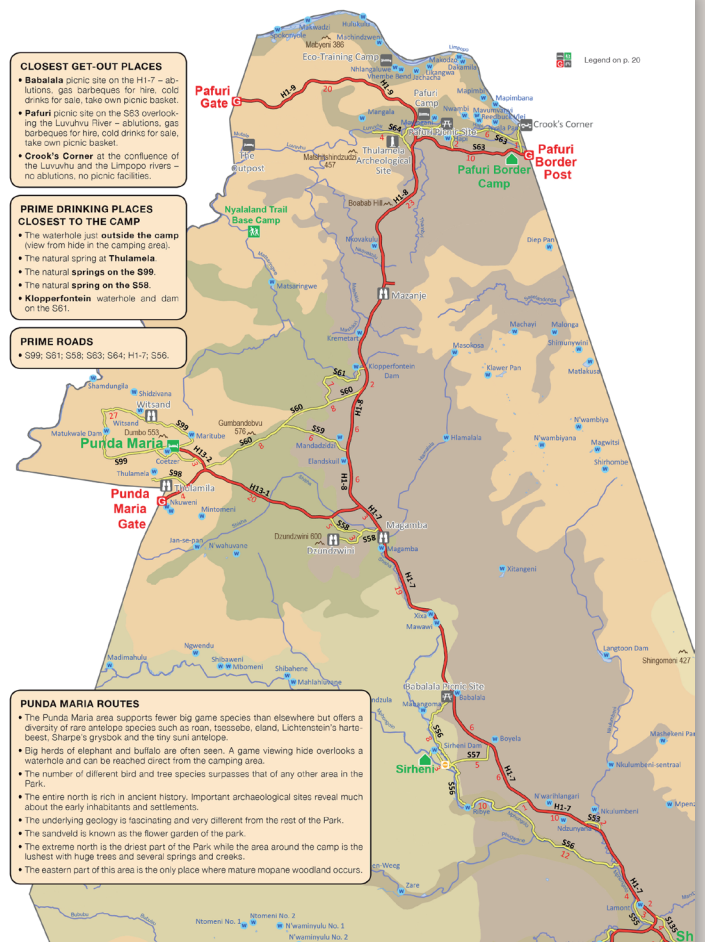
## PUNDA MARIA ROUTES

As early as 1919 Captain J J Coetser was appointed as the first ranger in the far north. His mission was to curb ivory poaching as the north was known as the haunt of smugglers, poachers and hunters. He first established a temporary camp at the natural spring on the S58 before he set up camp near the present Punda Maria. He named the camp after his wife Maria. For many years it was believed that the camp was named after the zebra because in Swahili (the indigenous language spoken there) 'punda' means stripe and 'milia' means donkey. Hence for many years the camp was called Punda Milia. In 1961 this error was corrected and the name Punda Maria was reinstated. It is the only camp where many of the original bungalows are still in use. The lush and diverse vegetation attracts a plethora of bird species, and dendrologists have a feast in identifying the many tree species.



COLOUR CODE	DESTINATION	DISTANCE TIME	ROUTE RATING	ELABORATION
Yellow	Thulamela Hill	19 km ± 1 hour	****	H13-2; H13-1; S98; Thulamela; H13-1; H13-2
Green	Mahoni Drive	29 km 1 hour +	*****	H13-2; S99 circumnavigating Dimbo Hill; H13-2
Blue	Klopperfontein	62 km 2 hours +	****	H13-2; S60; S61; Klopperfontein waterhole and dam; H1-8 south; H1-7 south; S58; Dzinzwini; H13-11; H13-2
Orange	Pafuri	132 km 5.5 hours	*****	H13-2; S60; H1-8 north; S64; S63; Pafuri picnic site; S63; H1-8; H13-1; H13-2
Purple	Shingwedzi	151 km 6 hours	****	H13-2; H13-1; H1-7 south; Babalala; S56; H1-7S; Shingwedzi; H1-7 north; H13-1; H13-2

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### CLOSEST GET-OUT PLACES

- Babalala picnic site on the H1-7 – ablutions, gas barbecues for hire, cold drinks for sale, take own picnic basket.
- Pafuri picnic site on the S63 overlooking the Luvuvhu River – ablutions, gas barbecues for hire, cold drinks for sale, take own picnic basket.
- Crook's Corner at the confluence of the Luvuvhu and the Limpopo. There are no ablutions, no picnic facilities.

### PRIME DRINKING PLACES CLOSEST TO THE CAMP

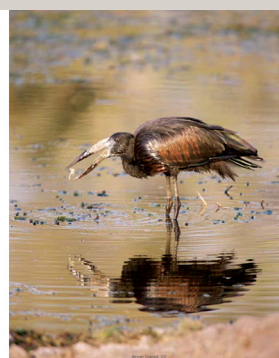
- The waterhole just outside the camp view from hide in the camping area.
- The natural spring at Thulamela.
- The natural springs on the S99.
- The natural spring on the S58.
- Klopperfontein waterhole and dam on the S61.

### PRIME ROADS

- S99; S61; S58; S63; S64; H1-7; S56.

### PUNDA MARIA ROUTES

- The Punda Maria area supports fewer big game species than elsewhere but offers a diversity of rare antelope species such as roan, topi, eland, Lichtenstein's hartebeest, Sharpe's grysbok and the tiny suni antelope.
- Big herds of elephant and buffalo are often seen. A game viewing hide overlooks a waterhole and can be reached direct from the camping area.
- The number of different bird and tree species surpasses that of any other area in the Park.
- The entire north is rich in ancient history. Important archaeological sites reveal much about the early inhabitants and settlements.
- The underlying geology is fascinating and very different from the rest of the Park. The sandveld is known as the flower garden of the park.
- The extreme north is the driest part of the Park while the area around the camp is the lushest with huge trees and several springs and creeks.
- The eastern part of this area is the only place where mature mopane woodland occurs.



H1-1



## H1-1

### NAPI ROAD BETWEEN NUMBI AND SKUKUZA



54 km; tarred; traverses four ecozones

Transport Dam; Shithlve Dam; Matekenyan granite dome; Napi Boulders

The Napi Road, one of the oldest in the Park, connects the Numbi Gate to Skukuza. It is also the first part of the main road (H1) that traverses the Park from south to north.

Typical of the Napi Road are the isolated **inselbergs** (free-standing hills or kopjes) of granite/gneiss boulders that dot the landscape. Not to be missed is the turn-off to the giant granite dome called **Matekenyan**. This provides a wonderful vantage point overlooking the entire Lowveld in all directions. In the far west is the northern Drakensberg escarpment, often shrouded in clouds. The granite foothills below the escarpment extend across the south-western parts of the Park. To the east are the flat plains of weathered basalt and, visible on the far horizon, the low Lebombo Hills.

**Predator and Big Five sightings are relatively good** along the entire route. Look out for leopard close to rocky outcrops, in trees and at watering points. Lion can be expected anywhere and cheetah sightings are often reported, especially in the vicinity of the Transport Dam. Hyena sightings are common, as they run along the road in the early mornings or at a den. Look out for a den close to the turn-off to the Transport Dam. Occasionally wild dogs are encountered along this road, but a pack has an extensive home range and is constantly on the move.

**Good browse and an assortment of grazing** through-



out the year offers an ideal habitat for a great variety of game species. There is a high probability of seeing elephant, kudu, impala and giraffe. Buffalo need large spaces and a lot of grazing, as do white rhino. The **Transport Dam** is a good place to see game. All the large herbivores have to drink regularly and, on hot days, may wallow to cool off. White rhino usually drink towards evening but elephant and buffalo may drink at any time of the day. The open savanna around the dam allows good visibility and abundant grazers provide ample prey for lion and cheetah.

**Klipspringers** are sure to be found at the **Napi Boulders** and other **granite inselbergs**, especially those near the intersection with the H3. Their habit of standing completely immobile for long periods, staring over the plains, makes them difficult to spot at times. They are usually seen in pairs, often with young. This is one of the most habitat-specific species in the Park.

Tall grasses and thick bush make game viewing difficult in the western section but this is ideal summer **habitat for sable antelope** and grazers such as zebra, wildebeest, buffalo and white rhino. Towards winter, game often moves away to sweet and much more palatable grazing along the narrow strip of thornveld in the Shithlve section.

The **western extremity** of the road passes through **broad-leaved sour bushveld**. Here, altitude and rainfall are the highest in the Park. The water-sheds are pronounced, with sharply incised drainage lines, while the soil is deep sand or sandy with loam. These soils are poor in nutrients and yield unpalatable grass cover, but support dense and diverse, mainly broad-leaved, tree cover.

About ten kilometres east of the Numbi Gate, as you approach the **Shithlve Dam**, the geology changes dramatically, and this in turn influences the vegetation. There are fewer broad-leaved trees: **thornveld** (mainly knob-thorn) replaces



Leopard at De la Porte waterhole

them. Here, the grass is sweet and extremely palatable. Look out for rare antelope such as roan, sable and tsessebe. At Shithlve Dam the road passes close to the water's edge; a shallow mud pool on one side of the dam is an ideal spot for wallowing animals.

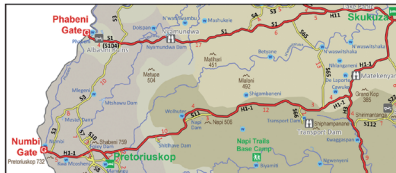
Between the Shithlve area and S65 the soils are sandy and **short-tree bushwillow woodland** is the dominant vegetation. Look out for silver cluster-leaf growing along seepage lines and the occasional black monkey orange in the sea of bushwillow. The dense, untidy sickle-bush shrubs with their curved pods and the widespread round-leaved teal make up most of the understorey. Marula and the occasional green thorn may be seen on the uplands.

Between the S65 and Skukuza, the road winds through rather dense **thorn thicket**. The soils here are generally shallow, but in places they have a high clay content and are

rich in minerals due to the leaching from adjoining water-sheds. This makes them suitable for a higher diversity of tree species. Knob-thorn is plentiful but other species such as green thorn (torchwood), false marula, tamboti and buffalo-thorn are well represented. Sickle-bush forms much of the understorey. Look for the occasional umbrella thorn with its typical flat crown, monkey apple and wild gardenia. There are a few spectacular specimens of the wild gardenia right next to the road.

Thorn thickets are the preferred habitat of **black rhino** and this would be a very special sighting. They are browsers and favour iamboti and sickle-bush. The **Lamont waterhole** is a good late afternoon place to enjoy a sundowner.

Due to the wide variety of habitats, birding is excellent along the entire route. The area around Pretoriuskop is particularly good for a few special bird species.



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S34



## S34

### MUNYWINI ROAD



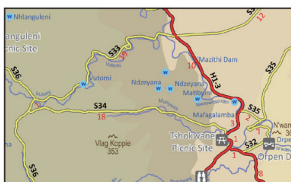
19 km narrow and intimate dirt road; traverses two major ecozones

The Munywini Road is a link between the H1-3 and the S36.

The eastern part of the road traverses typical **Delagoa thorn thickets** and visibility is somewhat restricted. This is a rather flat landscape where Karoo sediments (Ecca shales) underlie the vegetation. Water does not penetrate the soils easily and many **pans** tend to form. The grass here is generally short and sweet. The road crosses the partly dry **Munywini River course** twice. Look for bachelor buffaloes on the stream banks where the vegetation is lush. This part of the road generally offers good game viewing. Look out for both white and black rhino, as well as giraffe. Lion sightings are often reported.

The vegetation towards the western part changes gradually into **mixed bushwillow woodlands** where the underlying rock is **granite**, the savanna is more open and visibility improves. The grass along the drainage line is extremely palatable and attracts grazers. Kudu, giraffe and elephant may be expected anywhere.

This road may not be as popular as the Vutomi road but has just as much potential. Birding is average and any of the common bushveld species may be expected.

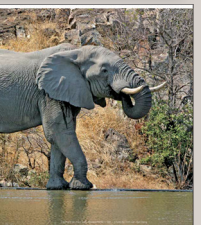
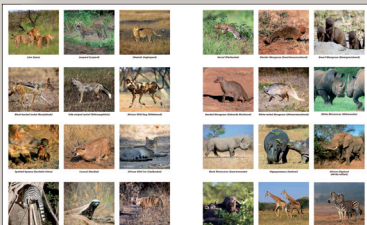


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Lion males, S34

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### INTRODUCTION TO ROADS

Self-driving in the Park is a good option – the maps are accurate, many roads are tarred and the gravel roads are well maintained. For optimal game spotting relax and slow down. Simply enjoy the experience of being in the bush.

Plan a steady, relaxed drive for the first 3–4 hours followed by a break at mid-morning at a waterhole or picnic site. The recommended speed for game spotting is 25 km/h on both tarred and gravel/dirt roads. Use this speed to calculate the time you will spend on your chosen route. Most sightings may be missed when you are driving at the maximum speed limit.

There can be no guarantee of sightings of any particular animal in any particular spot, but at the same time this unpredictability makes the game viewing experience so fascinating. Spend time birdwatching and tree spotting. It is amazing how often animals appear ‘from nowhere’ when you stop to look at birds or trees. Game is not evenly distributed in the park despite the rich diversity of species. Knowledge of the geology, climate and plant distribution will greatly enhance your ability to know what to look for and where. Find more information in the Appendix of this book.

The availability of surface water greatly influences the movements and concentrations of game. It may happen that a man-made waterhole is temporarily dry or closed. In most cases this is done intentionally as part of the management plan of the Park, or to give over-utilised areas a chance to regenerate.

### MAKING SENSE OF THE ROAD NUMBERS

You may find the road numbers confusing because there is not necessarily a system in the numerical order.

- The H roads are the main roads between the entrance gates and rest camps or between one main camp and the next. They are mostly tarred except for the H5 and the H15, which are gravel roads. The H1 starts at Numbi Gate and continues up to the Pafuri Gate in the north. There are nine sections numbered H1-1, H1-2, H1-3, etc.
- The S roads are the secondary roads, and they are mostly gravel or dirt roads or tracks. Exceptions are the S1, which is a tarred road between the Phabeni Gate and Skukuza Rest Camp; the southern section of the S110 from the H3 to the Berg-en-Dal Rest Camp; and the section of the S63 between the H1-8 and the Pafuri Border Post.
- The tarred roads carry heavier traffic than the back roads but they are wider, and the vegetation lining them is not covered in dust during the peak of the dry season. Game animals near these roads seem to be more relaxed and used to vehicles. The speed limit is 50 km/h.
- The dirt or gravel roads (back roads) can be dusty and corrugated in places or may even be temporarily closed after heavy rains, but fewer vehicles use them and you may enjoy sightings without getting stuck in traffic jams.

★★★★

ROAD NUMBER

ROAD NAME

★★

★★

★★★

★★★★

Distance; road conditions; ecozones

Places of interest on this road

Description of the road

### ABOUT THE RATINGS

The ratings given for the different routes and roads have no scientific basis. Various people who have an intimate knowledge of the Kruger roads assisted in the ratings given. These ratings cannot be anything but subjective and should merely serve as a general indication of what to expect. Game sightings are mostly unpredictable and one may expect surprises almost anywhere. The ratings reflect optimal conditions in the best game viewing seasons. Give your own ratings and make notes for future visits.

- ★ = A mostly quiet road with little activity
- ★★ = A quiet road, but there may be activity
- ★★★ = Average game and plant diversity, not particularly scenic
- ★★★★ = Usually good game and plant diversity and/or scenically pleasing
- ★★★★★ = Has all the attributes for good sightings and/or is scenically pleasing

= Probability of encountering predators

= Density of herbivores

= Birding potential

= Scenic beauty and tree diversity

= Distance, tarred or dirt; number of ecozones traversed

= Hotspots not to be missed



Chacma Baboon on the H1-8 at Pafuri

The Kruger National Park is not only a national asset for South Africa but is part of a dwindling global treasure and the collective natural heritage of all mankind. It embodies the spirit of wild Africa and offers a glimpse of what this part of the world looked like before human intervention. Although it is primarily a haven for the diverse indigenous fauna and flora and aims to conserve and preserve as much as possible of this pristine natural heritage, it is also there for the benefit and enjoyment of both local and international visitors. Situated in the South African Lowveld between the northern Drakensberg and Mozambique, the largest national park in South Africa stretches almost 365 km from north to south and 60 km from west to east. Roughly the size of Israel (20,000 square kilometres), it is among the 20 biggest national parks in the world.

The Park forms part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (35,000 square kilometres), a cross-border initiative of the Peace Parks Foundation. The challenge facing national parks and nature conservation is how to maintain the natural and pristine state of an area while facilitating the tourism that supports it. To achieve this Kruger is zoned according to three categories – parts of the park are zoned for development and general tourist activities offering accommodation, an extensive network of tourist roads, picnic sites and educational centres. Then there are sections set aside to remain pristine wilderness areas where any human disturbances are limited. Between the pristine areas and the more developed parts, huge natural zones act as a buffer. The well-maintained tourist roads make self-driving possible and desirable for the freedom it offers. Spiritual and educational enjoyment derived from observation leads to knowledge, respect and a greater understanding of the natural world.



This book intends to enhance the self-drive experience in the Kruger National Park. Knowledge of animals, birds, rainfall, landscapes and underlying soil and rocks fits together in a fascinating way. Innumerable routes are introduced, fully supported by maps, photos of the flora and fauna to be found in the area. In addition to the general introduction and advice offered, each section of a route is rated according to the type of creature likely to be observed and the likelihood of observation; distances and traversal times are always present, and the availability of hides, rest and picnic spots and facilities are also there.

This unique and highly practical book demonstrates just how accessible the African bush can be to all, and how easy it is to drive yourself on a holiday of a lifetime while watching (and photographing!) some of the most amazing animals and birds on the planet. Not to be missed!