



OVERBERG HORSE TRAILS | 9 DAY ITINERARY

9 day – 10 nights

(Shorter trails of 5-7 days can be tailored from this itinerary)

Day 0 : arrive Farm215 mid- afternoon. Dinner

Day 1: Farm 215 to Bodhi Khaya / 4 hours

From Farm215, we make our way through protea and fynbos plantations via the hilltops overlooking the wide Valley of the Uilkraalsrivier with its green meadows. We cross the Uilkraalsrivier and climb the kloofs to “Witvoetskloof” a mountain flower farm. From here we descend the mountain to Baviaansfonteyn. This unique farm is graced by ancient trees and a myriad of mountain streams. It is unlike any other location, with mountains rising behind giving a sense of seclusion and nourishment not found anywhere else in the rugged and harsh terrains of the Overberg. We arrive early to spend a full half-day enjoying this oasis. Massage sessions available on this day. (Price R300pp)

Day 2: Bodi Khaya to Bodi Khaya / 4 hours

Round trip returning back to Bodhi Khaya. This day is flexible with regards to length. Good opportunity to tune in for the coming days including climbs and mountain top canters.

Day 3: Bodhi Khaya- Klein Paradys / 5 hours

We ride down from Mount Dyer into the lowland and limestone fynbos of Heidehof and Avilla, situated in the Rooi Strandveld, and ride towards the sea.

Reach the coast just before lunch, passing Pearly Beach and onto Klein Paradys.

This area is a centre of limestone fynbos. Soils are alkaline, organic-rich and usually confined to small pot holes in the limestone pavement. Colonisation of this type of ground by acid-loving fynbos plants was a major physiological challenge, resulting in the evolution of many limestone specific species. Experience the unique scent and fragrance of this limestone landscape.

We will ride over a long undisturbed sand beach with a lot of rocky outcrops and pools. Depending on time, weather and our horses’ moods, there will be an opportunity to play and swim on the beach. The horses are always alive to the splash of the waves cooling their feet.

Day 4: Klein Paradys to Ratel River / 5 hours

We continue along the coast to Buffelsjagsrivier and then on past Quoin rock to Ratel River for the overnight stop, situated right on the coast. Ratel River is an old limestone built estate that forms the gateway to the Agulhas National Park. Minnie Groenewald of the local community, will treat

us to local flavours and cuisine of the Overberg. Enjoy the stars under the bright African sky and listen to the sound of the ocean at night.

Agulhas National Park / Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative (ABI)

The Agulhas Plain is a prime conservation area because it is exceptionally rich in plant species and was once covered with lowland fynbos and renosterveld. Approximately 2500 indigenous plant species with 100 endemic to the area and 112 threatened species are found here. The lowlands of the Cape Floral Kingdom is a global biodiversity hotspot. It contains some of the world's most endangered ecosystems, renosterveld and wetlands yet very little remains.

Three hundred years ago, black rhinoceros and other large mammals roamed free on renosterveld plains – of the 81 terrestrial mammals known from the Cape Floral Kingdom, 72 used to occur on the Agulhas Plain. The bloubok, a spectacular relative of the Roan antelope, used to live exclusively on the Overberg renosterveld plains, but was shot to extinction in the 1700s. The geometric tortoise – one of the world's rarest – is found only in renosterveld and is highly threatened. Renosterveld is often considered the ugly sister of Fynbos but it is really a Cinderella. For most of the year this vegetation looks dry and dull but during spring the incredible displays of delicate geophytes and carpets of annuals transform this typically grey vegetation into a spectacle of variety and colour. It's really a wonderful vegetation often overlooked – it has the highest diversity of bulbs for any vegetation type in the world.

There are also a wide variety of wetlands in the area. They may at first site appear to be smelly wastelands but these wetlands with their complex ecosystems support specialised forms of life, some of which occur nowhere else. About 130 species of birds and also many plants, invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles and mammals are inter-dependent on the wetlands' intricate food webs. The Agulhas coastline also supports a rich marine and intertidal life and rare coastal birds breed along it. The nearby islands are home to many seabirds and seals.

Not only is the area of great ecological importance, but also an area with a rich cultural heritage. More than 100 shipwrecks dot the coastline and many other national monuments and historic buildings are found in the area. Stone hearths and pottery together with shell middens and other archaeological sites are lined with the era of Khoisan migration and settlements.

This area is thus part of what is called the Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative (ABI). The Agulhas National Park was proclaimed in 1999 with land of 100ha around the lighthouse at the southernmost tip of Africa, this has been expanded to 20 000ha through the farms in the coastal strip which we traverse on the way to Cape Agulhas. The eventual goal is a conservation area of 120 000ha.

Day 5: RatelRiver to Renosterkop / 5 hours

Explore incredible dune systems and rocky coastline around Brandfontein. This day is short with regards to distance and allows us time to take in the powerful nature of this untouched area. We will have lunch in the middle of the dune system and take advantage of this surreal terrain for photography and exploration.

We will be staying at Renosterkop, another of the historic buildings found in the area. A plaque at the roadside indicates that the buildings are amongst the oldest in the Strandveld, built from 1795.

Meals will be prepared(again by local community of Elim) around the open fire, usually “braai” or potjiekos” typically South African and often a surprise. Enjoy campfire, potjiekos and stories....

The horses wander, paddocked around the house so you will have them close enough to hear their nickering through the night.

Day 6: Renosterkop to southernmost tip of Africa and back to Renosterkop / 6 hrs

We will visit the southernmost tip of Africa. Despite the number of places called “Two Oceans” in Cape Town, the residents of Agulhas will be quick to assure you that the mighty Indian and Atlantic oceans do indeed meet at the Southern Tip of the African continent at Cape Agulhas, and not in Cape Town, even if Cape Point is a tad more dramatic. A low key cairn marks the furthest south one can go in Africa without getting one’s toes wet. A demarcation line indicates the Indian Ocean on the left and the Atlantic on the right. Be warned: strong winds and fierce elements in this wild powerful place are not uncommon. This dramatic wind-swept coastline is also known as the graveyard of ships, as more than 120 wrecks have been recorded in the area.

Standing there watching seabirds hunt their respective dinners, we have no doubt that you will feel a sense of awe that you are at the very southernmost tip of Africa.

Once we leave the southernmost tip, for hours there will be only you and the rest of the small group of horse riders in undiscovered parts of the Western Cape. We will be alone with nature and without any other human beings or man-made structures. Public roads will be rarities you will cross at a few short intervals.

Day 7: Renosterkop to the historic Strandveld Farm Ratelrivier via old burnt down limestone buildings at Rietfontein / 4hours

We will continue exploring the Agulhas Plain, leaving our camp at Renosterkop and making our way back to Rietfontein following a track along the bottom of the Soetanyserge. This is a floral paradise.

Lunch is at Rietfontein, which derives its name from the natural fountain that surfaces there amongst the reeds. These fountains are the oasis’s of the plains. We eat under the protective canopies of the Milkwood trees.

The historic buildings on this farm were burnt down A long House and barn, all built of local limestone in the 18th century were destroyed with their contents We will rest on this farm, explore the ruins and walk the hills, of this beautiful setting.

After lunch we continue towards Ratelrivier where we will spend the night at one of the oldest farms in the Overberg Strandveld. A limestone mansion and luxurious stables tell a story of “gracious and extravagant living”. Stories that span more than 240 years, some with a darker shadow are only slowly emerging.

Day 8: Ratelrivier to Koudeberg / 7 hours

After days on the coast and exploring the coastal lowlands we will experience unspoilt mountain fynbos and spectacular views. We will follow a stone wall (built in the early 1900s) for over 10 km along the mountain top and then descend the rocky fynbos slopes on our way to “Groot Hagelkraal” farm, one of the so-called Overberg hotspots for rare and endemic species.

We will traverse Groot Hagelkraal and ride past spectacular limestone cliffs. This is an incredible opportunity to view a landscape totally unique, not only in the Western Cape or in Africa, but in the whole world. Here the terrain has changed into a gnarly group of jutting lime stone hills and overhanging mountains: home of 6 plant species that are endemic to 5 square kilometres in this area. Another 21 plant species occur in this botanical hotspot and are restricted to about half of the area you will cover on this horse trail. Be on the lookout for animals and special plants of the region.

We will move through farms and nature reserves and pass by the rural sleepy village of Baardskeerdersbos. From Baardskeederbos we traverse kloofs and gullies of the Koudeberge, making our way to the Palmietberg and climbing to Perdekop. It's sweaty work for our horses but Perdekop, the highest peak in the area is rewarding where we can wallow in remarkable views a magnificent part of the Western Cape, and the areas we covered – Klein Rivier lagoon near Stanford to Klein Rivier Mountains and over the Agulhas Plains separating the Overberg from the ocean.

A slow descent brings us past the Koudeberg-dam to our resting place in the Koudeberg Valley: a renovated house, beautifully nestled in its own rocky outcrop. Listen to the frogs in the wetlands lower down from the veranda or enjoy an evening walk to the waterfall in a small indigenous forest.

If you wander up the road behind the cottage you'll come to what is reckoned to be the highest dam in the southern Overberg, ideal for long swims in that strange golden red water that's a feature of fynbos areas. Follow the little stream that trickles year round into the dam and you'll discover a faint baboon trail which leads to a waterfall hidden by towering Cape hollies more than 200 years old.

Day 9: Koudeberg to Farm215 / 3 hours

Late breakfast and after a swim with the horses in the dam, a slow return to Farm215.

Arrival at Farm215 around midday and back to luxurious rest and a final dinner feast with plenty local wine.