

Introduction

The Marakele National Park in the heart of the Waterberg Mountains, as its Tswana name suggests, has become a 'place of sanctuary' for an impressive variety of wildlife due to its location in the transitional zone between the dry western and moister eastern regions of South Africa.

Contrasting majestic mountain landscapes, grass-clad hills and deep valleys characterize the park. Rare finds of yellowwood and cedar trees, five metre high cycads and tree ferns, are some of the plant species found here. All the large game species from elephant and rhino to the big cats as well as an amazing variety of birds including what's probably the largest colony of endangered Cape vultures (more than 800 breeding pairs) in the world, have settled here.

Areas of Special Interest

A narrow tar road takes visitors up to the top of the Waterberg massif. Views and scenery are spectacular. One is also in the proximity of the vulture colony and these large birds will soar past at close quarters.

5 Things to Seek

- Cape Vulture – the park hosts one of the world's largest breeding colonies of this endangered species. While birds may be seen in the air catching thermals anywhere in the park, the drive up to the Sentech Towers is nearest to the colony and close encounters with these enormous birds will leave visitors breathless.
- African Elephant – while some elephant had been previously reintroduced into the park, it was the release of the Tuli elephants in 1999 that captured the public's and media's imagination.
- Rhino – Marakele has a high density of both rhino species and most visitors should see these animals, particularly the more gregarious and diurnal white rhinoceros.
- Kudu – as browsers these antelope are in their element at Marakele. Look out for the bulls with their magnificent spiral horns.
- The not-so-often-seen-elsewhere antelope species such as reedbuck, mountain reedbuck, eland and tsessebe can be found here.

Accommodation

Camps

[Tlopi Tented Camp](#)

Each tent has two beds (two stretchers are available which are more suitable for children), private bathroom (shower, wash basin and toilet), and a fully equipped kitchen with a refrigerator/freezer, two-plate stove and electricity. Each tent has a veranda with table and deck chairs and barbecue facilities. One tent has wheelchair access. The camp is unfenced and is approximately 17km from the Reception Office.

[Bontle Camping Site](#)

There are 38 campsites with power arranged into 3 clusters with one communal ablution block per cluster.

Concession Lodge

[Marataba Safari Company](#): Tel: +27 (0) 44 501 1111: The lodge is situated on a 23 000 hectare private concession in the heart of Limpopo's Marakele National Park. For more information on this lodge, please visit the website - www.marataba.com

General Information

To view the accommodation prices, refer to [Tariffs](#)

Activities & Facilities

Activities

- Bird watching and game viewing.
- Mountain pass up to an incredible view and proximity to the Cape vulture colony.
- Morning and Sunset drives available.
- Morning and Sunset Bush walks available.
- Two nights [4x4 eco trail](#) available.
- Two nights Hiking Trail opening soon.

Come and enjoy the core of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve Wilderness experience with qualified and experienced Field Guides/Rangers in the park.

Facilities

The Kwaggasvlakte plains immediately north of the reception/office complex and camping site can be traversed in a normal sedan, as can the entrance roads to the safari tent camp and bush camp. The narrow track up to the towers is also accessible to sedan vehicles. Most other roads will present difficult terrain.

In an effort to keep the park ecosystem as undisturbed as possible, most facilities are located outside the park in the adjacent town of Thabazimbi.

Other Facilities:

- Shop: In Thabazimbi.
- Restaurant: In Thabazimbi.
- 80km of our roads are accessible to normal sedan vehicles.
- Electricity: Only the tented camp and camping site is supplied with electricity.
- Fuel: Petrol and diesel available in Thabazimbi.
- Garage: In Thabazimbi.
- Medical services: Doctor and hospital in Thabazimbi.
- Telephone: There are no public telephones in the park, but these are available in Thabazimbi.
- Post Office: In Thabazimbi.
- Police: The nearest police stations are located 12km from the office and camping site in Thabazimbi and approximately 18km north of the Kareehoek turnoff at Hoopdal.

Natural & Cultural History

- The park was first known as the Kransberg National Park when it was first proclaimed in 1994.
- The Waterberg was the area that the naturalist, poet and author Eugene Marais lived in and inspired such works as his renowned novel "Soul of the White Ant."
- Ramolefe Boy Moatshe has lived in the area all his life. On 4 August 1981 he survived a 15 minute bare handed fight with a leopard (that he had surprised) after taking a calf from the herd he was tending. Ten hours after the attack he made it to hospital. He spent 2 months in rehabilitation in the hospital.
- The park also has an abundance of iron-age sites that will be made accessible to visitors in the future.

How to get there

- The park is situated in the Waterberg mountain range in the Limpopo Province (formerly Northern Province) near Thabazimbi, approximately 250km north of [Johannesburg](#), in a malaria-free area.
- Driving distances to Marakele: from Gauteng is 4 hours and from Tshwane 3 hours.
- Travellers can take either:
 - the N1 to Bela-Bela (Warmbaths) and from there follow the R516 via Mabula and Leeupoort to Thabazimbi
 - or travel to Brits and follow the R511 via Beestekraal to Thabazimbi.
- The office is approximately 12km from Thabazimbi crossing on the road from Thabazimbi to Alma.

GPS Coordinates

S 24°31.860' and E 027°29.896'

Gate Times:

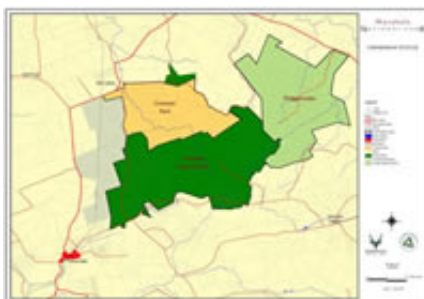
- Gate opens at 06:00 and closes at 18:00 - 1st Sept to 30th April
- Gate opens at 06:00 and closes at 17:30 - 1st May to 31st August

Park Maps

Park Map



Greater Marakele



Regional Map



Tariffs

- [General Tariffs Information](#)
- [Pensioners' Discount](#)
- [Daily Conservation Fee](#)
- *Members of SANParks' loyalty programme WILD do not pay conservation fees provided that proof of Identity and their WILD card are shown on arrival.*
- [Cost of a Wild Card](#)
- [View accommodation pictures and availability for Marakele National Park](#)

Daily Conservation Fees for 1 November 2011 to 31 October 2012

South African Citizens and Residents (with ID):	R27 per adult, per day R14 per child, per day
SADC Nationals (with passport):	R54 per adult, per day R27 per child, per day
Standard Conservation Fee (Foreign Visitors):	R108 per adult, per day R54 per child, per day

Vital Information

Overnight Visitors:

- No driving at night is allowed in the Park.
- No collection of firewood.
- You will be warned at reception about roads that are inaccessible in the Park. Should you drive on these roads and get stuck we will contact a towing company for you and you will be charged for recovery expenses.
- Fines will be given if you drive off the roads.
- Your vehicle can be searched at exit points.
- Be aware of BABOONS and VERVET MONKEYS. Keep your tents closed when driving around and lock food in the tent's cupboard. You may even turn the fridge slightly so that the door does not open easily.

Don't let anything lie around.

- Please do not feed the animals. Vervet Monkeys will soon become habituated to this and create serious problems in the future.
- You are not allowed to get out of your vehicle, except at places indicated to you on the map, by the receptionist.
- No pets are allowed in the Park.
- A general speed limit of 30 km/h must be maintained within the Park's boundaries.
- Firearms must be declared at reception.
- You have to vacate the tent at 10:00 on the day of departure.
- The key for the gates must be returned to reception on the day of departure. Alternatively you can leave the key at the points indicated to you by the receptionist.
- Please keep your entrance permit with you while driving in the Park.
- No fishing is allowed in the dam.

****If you have a problem with the interpretation of the rules, please enquire at reception.****

Check-in and Check-out times

- Check in 14:00
- Check out 10:00

Office Hours

- Reception opens 07:00 and closes at 18:00 from 1st Sept to 30th April
- Reception opens 07:00 and closes at 17:30 from 1st May to 31st August

Day Visitors

Entrance from 07:00 to 16:00. No need to book in advance. Currently there is no limit on number of people per day. 4x4 routes as well as routes for sedan vehicles are open to day visitors.

- No visitors are allowed at the back of open vehicles.
- Your vehicle can be searched at exit points.
- No collecting of firewood.
- Day visitors have certain areas and roads where they can drive. You will be warned at reception about roads that are inaccessible in the Park. Should you drive on these roads and get stuck we will contact a towing company for you and you will be charged for recovery expenses.
- Fines can be given should you drive off the roads.
- People are not allowed to get out of their vehicles, except at places shown on the map by the receptionist.
- No pets are allowed in the park
- Firearms must be declared at reception
- A general speed limit of 30 km/h must be maintained within the park's boundaries.
- Office hours are from 07:00 in the morning until 16:00 in the afternoon.
- The gates close at 18:00 in summer time and at 17:30 in winter. If you are still inside the Park after the gates have closed you can be given a fine.
- Tour operators must be licensed with FGASA and SATOUR to operate in National Parks. A proper game-drive vehicle will be required.
- Tour operators will pay a set entrance price – check details with park. Tour operators must be registered with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and be in possession of a valid Deat membership card as proof.

****Should you be uncertain as to the interpretation of a rule, please enquire at reception.****

Climate

Summers are hot but the area does not suffer from the stifling humidity so typical of the eastern Lowveld. The park is situated in the summer rainfall region and rainfall occurs in the form of heavy thunderstorms or soft rain. Winter is moderate with frost occurring in the low-lying regions only. Mornings and nights can be cold, but day temperatures are pleasant. Rainfall between 500 – 700mm per annum.

Hints & Tips

- Remember to bring a camera, binoculars, bird and wildlife reference books, a hat and sunscreen lotion. Also remember to take along medicines such as anti-histamine and lotion for insect stings and bites.
- Cool clothing for summer and warm for winter - the region is subject to sudden changes in weather, particularly in the mountains.
- Remember charcoal or wood, as this is not available in the park.
- Visitors should also remember to take a torch along, as the camp has no illumination between units at night.
- The safari camp has not been fenced and therefore visitors to Marakele are warned to stay within the confines of the tent and deck area. Walking outside the confines of the camp will put you at risk of dangerous game and negatively affect the experience of other visitors.
- Pets are not permitted in a national park.
- Vehicle fuel is available in all parks (or is available on the park periphery) - South African legislation stipulates that fuel stations will accept legitimate *petrol/fuel/garage/credit/debit cards* or cash as a form of payment for any fuel purchase.
- Firearms must be declared at the entrance gate.
- No open vehicles are allowed. Passengers on the back of an open vehicle are also not allowed.
- Medical, pharmaceutical, vehicle repair, fuel, post office and police at Thabazimbi.

Contact Information

For enquiries e-mail Marakele National Park or phone us on the following numbers:

- Park Tel: +27 (0)14 777 6929/6928 & 6931
- Fax: +27 (0)14 777 1866
- Duty Manager: Mirriam Rapoo Cell: 071 935 7306

Mammals

Marakele is home to most of the large mammals synonymous with the African bush, including elephant, black and white rhino, and leopard. Large Predators such as brown hyena, leopard and now also lion, occur in the park. Resident antelope include, sable, kudu, eland, impala, waterbuck, tsessebe and many smaller species. Chacma baboon and vervet monkey are two species to be watched carefully for mischief, particularly around the rest camps.

Vegetation

Approximately 55% of the park is characterized by the Waterberg Moist Bushveld vegetation type (veld type 12).

This vegetation type occurs in the intermediate to high lying areas in the southern and south-eastern portions of the park. This area is characterized by relatively high rainfall (719 mm) and the resultant leaching of the soils results in a fairly low soil nutrient status. This limiting factor in turn results in a fairly low carrying capacity and only ubiquitous species such as kudu and common reedbuck are common in these areas. This vegetation type is characterized by Transvaal beechwoods (*Faurea salinga*), proteas (*Protea caffra*) and stem fruit trees (*Englerophytum magaliesmontanum*). The vegetation along the tarred road leading to the towers are typical of the vegetation type.

Another major vegetation type is the Mixed Bushveld (veld type 18), which covers approximately 42% of the park. This vegetation type is mainly found in the northwestern and isolated southwestern pockets of the park. It occurs predominantly on the undulating to flat plains and the soils are generally clayey, deeper and more nutrient-rich. Most of the charismatic game species such as black rhino, elephant and wild dog will be associated with this vegetation type. This vegetation type is characterized by species such as silver cluster leaf (*Terminalia sericea*), sickle bush (*Dichrostachys cinerea*) and round-leaved teak (*Pterocarpus rotundifolias*). The vegetation around the camping site and tented camp is typical of this vegetation type.

Less than 3% of the park is comprised of Sweet Bushveld (veld type 17). This veld type is mostly found along the banks of the Matlabas River and forms an important winter refuge area for game particularly during limiting periods at the end of the dry season. The planned western expansion of the park will include more of this vegetation type, which is crucial to sustain adequate numbers of prey species for large predators such as lion and spotted hyena.

One of the rare and threatened plant species of Marakele is the Waterberg cycad (Waterbergbroodboom) *Encephalartos eugene-maraisii*. The naturalist, author and poet Eugene Marais lived in the Waterberg for 16 years and this cycad was named in his honor. This cycad is endemic to the Waterberg region and grows to 5 m tall among low shrubs at an altitude of 1 450 m.

From its Waterberg Cycads to Yellow-woods and Camel Thorns, Marakele National Parks supports about 765 plant species.

People with disabilities

Wheelchair Access

An in-depth [accessibility profile](#) for Marakele National Park has been compiled.

Marakele is a wilderness area with limited tourism facilities for everyone. Much of the park requires a 4x4 vehicle. The safari tent camp has 10 units, one of which is accessible to people in wheelchairs, with an access ramp and adapted ablution facilities (roll-in shower). No accessible facilities are available at the Bush Camp. The new reception block has a unisex ablution facility for people with mobility impairment. The camping site also has ablution facilities for wheelchair-bound visitors.

(Please see additional information on [Wheelchair Accessibility](#))