

NATURAL HISTORY

NATURE RESERVES (INCLUDING TRAILS) AND BEACHES OF BUFFALO CITY

Nature Reserves

Umtiza Nature Reserve

This reserve is under the authority of East Cape Nature Conservation (Provincial Department of Economic Affairs Environment and Tourism) and conserves the special endemic tree the Umtiza (*Umtiza listerana*) and a number of other valuable tree species, including the cycads. From a mammal perspective fortunate visitors may see the Samango monkeys – these primates are not widely distributed in South Africa and follow a patchy distribution along the forested eastern areas of the country.

The Reserve has a public road running through it with separate trails on either side for free visitor access (a self issuing permit system is in place). Three routes have been well-marked, a 1.5 km, 2.5 km and a 7 km track each highlighting unique flora of this forest fragment.

Established in 1985, approximately 758 ha of forest has been protected with occasional exotics from previous plantations. Access to the reserve is via Buffalo Pass which crosses the Buffalo River when one leaves Buffalo City traveling westward.

Amalinda Nature Reserve

This nature reserve is also under the authority of East Cape Nature Conservation. It is a large open space located on the north-western part of East London (9 km from the city center) and boasts some large mammalian species such as eland (3), zebra (10), southern reedbuck (25) and blesbok (20). A commercial fish hatchery is also situated in the reserve.

Visitors can walk selected routes in the area, spend time at a dam or picnic at designated sites. Bushbuck, duiker, cape clawless otter, vervet monkey's and mongoose also occur and birdwatching is productive throughout the year.

Unfortunately a low income housing project adjacent to the reserve has created an edge effect as all indigenous plants were bull-dozed for the development.

Ablutions are not presently available and the reserve lacks the necessary funding to maintain it in a satisfactory condition. This 134 ha reserve was established in 1968 around the Amalinda reservoir. Three main vegetation communities are found in the area, namely, open *Acacia karoo* dominated savannah, open to closed bushveld and riverine forest.

Gonubie Nature Reserve

This reserve was established in 1955 (the fifth oldest to be proclaimed in the country) to conserve a wetland habitat and associated bird, plant and animal species. It is 8 ha in extent and has a well-established walking route which circumvents the fenced area, including a bird hide overlooking an open body of water. This makes it ideal for birdwatchers interested in wetland species.

This reserve also has a small interpretive center with bird and animal lists and a brief history of the area. Ablutions are available and visitors are encouraged to utilize benches and open spaces for picnicking.

This municipal reserve is located in the suburb of Gonubie and is only open to the public at certain times during the week. Access by appointment can also be arranged through the local authority. The place name Gonubie is derived from *iqunube* – the fruit of the bramble.

Nahoon Estuary Nature Reserve (incorporating the Dassie Trail)

Nahoon Point Nature Reserve

Beaches

Kidd's Beach

This popular holiday beach introduces a sweep of sandy beaches to the visitor as one moves eastward. An ablution facility and a paddling pool have been formalized as one accesses the beach and a scatter of rocky outcrops allows for inquisitive investigations at low tide.

The beach, however, has an informal launch site for small craft which contradicts the present regulations with regard to bathing beaches in the area.

A restaurant is close by for meals and refreshments and safe parking is available. Life-guards are on duty during the holiday season.

Gulu Beach

The Gulu River (a blind river for most of the year) has a wide flat open beach area seaward of the system which when under controlled conditions (life-guards in summer) makes for safe bathing. A run down ablution facility exists but not much parking. The Beach is mostly used by recreational anglers and the odd day tripper. Out of season the area would not be considered safe for single recreationalists.

Igoda Beach



This is a jewel of sand, well-forested primary dunes, a safe bathing river (blind for most of the year) and a wide long stretch of open beach to stroll in safety.

Ablution facilities are available and well-maintained. Parking is secure when the area is accessed from the village of Winterstrand. Picnicking is encouraged and a braai base has been built. The road to Igoda runs adjacent to a nature reserve and walks in the grassland covered slopes will reveal many flowering plant species, including the red-hot poker, a blaze of colour in late spring to early summer.

Cove Rock Beach



An outstanding promontory and a vestige of a fossilized dune, Cove Rock juts out at the end of the beach welcoming those who like to explore. A fair walk to this huge eroded dune rock reveals wave-cut platforms, paddling pools and a trail over the top which offers some excellent vantage points for whale watching. Cove Rock is also popular with the angling fraternity.

The area holds a lot of historical significance and is still used today for religious ceremonies by the local people. A proposal has been submitted to heritage authorities to have the area declared a provincial heritage site.

Orient Beach

The area adjacent to this protected beach has been upgraded with excellent facilities for young children to enjoy water sports. Various paddling pools have been constructed within a 'play park' atmosphere enhancing the visitor experience in a safe environment.

Ablution facilities are good and well maintained. A large car park supports visitor accessibility to this beach.

Eastern Beach

This is a popular beach for locals, especially during the holiday seasons. Eastern Beach has easy access to all the beachfront amenities and is an introductory area for those visitors who may in the future walk to the proposed Nahoon Point Nature Reserve.

Ablutions are maintained and life-guards do duty for a good part of the year due to high visitor numbers. Some picnic facilities have been provided close to this beach at 'Little Mauritius' with additional ablutions.

The area does, however, become congested during peak holiday times and parking can be a problem.

Nahoon Beach



A world famous part of the Buffalo City coastline, Nahoon Beach has in the past hosted international and national wave-ski and surfing competitions respectively. The wide expanse of open sand, protected topographically by a 'bay', offers bathers and surfers plenty of room to enjoy the surf as well as stroll to the nearby Nahoon River mouth. The latter allows access up river at low tide to 'Playwaters' which is also a launch site for small craft and jet-ski's.

Nahoon Beach has another smaller river, the Inhlanza (also closed for most of the year), running down from the nearby suburbs of Bonnie Doon and Nahoon. This river is excellent for birdwatching and has a lot of potential for the development of a walking route toward the driving range.

The beach has ablution and showering facilities and a number of car parks. These are, however, inadequate during the peak holiday season.

Bonza Bay Beach



The Quenera River estuary abuts this beach and access to Bonza Bay beach allows the visitor a choice of walking, safe swimming and the pleasant pastime of dune picnics. Moving east a walk to Gonubie can undertaken and westward a walk toward the Nahoon River and the Blue Bend Nature Reserve.

Reasonable ablution facilities are provided and children can enjoy 'water tube' rides at a the entrance to the beach close to the river mouth. The mouth is closed for the most part of the year.

Fishing on the Quenera River is also popular.

Gonubie Mouth Beach

This beach is adjacent to the Gonubie River and good facilities exist for the visitor, including a Boardwalk which allows access to the Gonubie Hotel and a popular walk around Gonubie Point.

The wide expanse of the sandy estuary flood plain and well vegetated cliffs create a sheltered 'amphitheatre' for safe controlled leisure activities such as bathing, boating, windsurfing and fishing.