

## History and Location

The Aloe Trail comprises two trails, the 2km Pluridens Trail and a longer 5km Lineata Trail. The Trails start at the top of Tippers Creek Road, between Amsterdamhoek and Bluewater Bay. The trail route goes via the escarpment overlooking Amsterdamhoek, returning through Valley Thicket on the plateau. Amsterdamhoek is named after a Dutch man-of-war, the Amsterdam, which ran aground near the mouth of the Swartkops River on 16 December 1817.

The dense, thorny, succulent and stunted vegetation known as Valley Thicket seen along the trail has adapted to the arid climate by different species storing water in leaves, stems or underground bulbs.

Aloe pluridens found mainly at the start of the trail make a stunning show when in flower during June/July and attract many sunbirds. Spekboom, Portulacaria afra, prolific in this reserve, is remarkable for absorbing Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) day and night. Formerly the bush supported herds of game animals, including Elephants, as evidenced by the series of elephant wallows which can be seen on the trail as bush-free depressions that hold water after good rains.

Estuaries are amongst the most productive ecosystems on earth where salt marsh vegetation provides food for mud prawn and other invertebrates living in the intertidal mudbanks, these animals in turn provide a food source for birds and fish.

## Important Information

Please remember that this is a Nature Reserve:

- All plant and animal life is protected and must not be disturbed or harmed.
- Please keep on the trail at all times.
- Be vigilant. It is recommended to hike in groups of eight.
- Please do not smoke or light fires while on the trail.
- Dogs on a leash are allowed.
- Do not litter.
- Carry two litres of drinking water per person.
- Escape routes are marked with white arrows.



**In case of emergency** please contact:

South African Police Service: 10111

Ambulance: 10177

Fire Department: +27 (0) 41 585 1555

Search and Rescue: +27 (0) 41 585 1555

open  
daily

08h00  
to  
16h30

General Enquiries	Tourism Office: +27 (0) 41 585 8884
Complaints/Log a Query	0800 205050
Environmental Management	+27 (0) 41 506 5464
Trail Permits	No permit required/Free entrance
Associations	Swartkops Conservancy (www.swartkopsconservancy.org) +27 (0) 76 359 4534 +27 (0) 82 853 0700

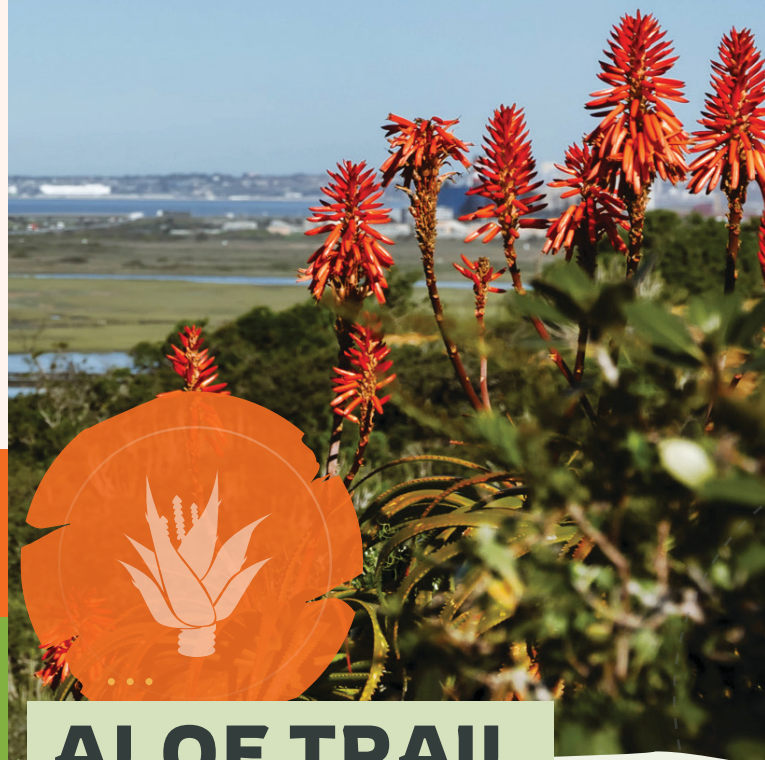


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## ALOE TRAIL

Circular Route

A **breathtaking** experience that leaves **plant lovers** and **birdwatchers** in awe. The circular route of the Aloe Trail takes hikers along the **escarpment** overlooking **Amsterdamhoek** and the **Swartkops Estuary** and returns through the **mesmerising Valley Thicket** on the plateau.

7km

Duration:  
2 / 3 Hours

Difficulty:  
Easy

# Explore and Experience

**Birdwatching:** About 200 species are regularly recorded in the lower Swartkops Valley. Allow 3 hours to bird the estuary (low tide is essential), salt pans and some of the bush from the roads, when 60 species can be expected. Estuary birds are best seen at low tide. The salt pans between Swartkops and Redhouse are good for a variety of water birds including flamingos. To adequately cover all the areas requires a long morning and can produce 100 species in summer and is one of the “must see” birding venues in the area.



## Tipplers Garden and Hunting Dog Graves:

In 1891 some of the land in Amsterdam Hoek was sold to Loton Tipper, James Green and Nelson Pearson. On retirement Tipper and his wife lived permanently at “the Hoek”. He built two wood-and-iron homes, the second uphill from the water in what is now Tipper’s Creek Road. Above the house there was a garden, now part of the Aloe Reserve, and here the graves of hunting dogs are still visible.



**Trig Beacons:** There are three Trig Beacons on the Aloe Trail that form part of the National Control Survey Network which helped to make accurate map-making possible across the country. If you climb one you will see it has a horizontal coordinate and a height marked on top.

**The Wallows:** Formerly this bush supported many game animals, including elephant. The only remaining evidence of the presence of these large mammals is well-worn game tracks and the old wallows. The trail passes through a series of these wallows which can be seen as bush-free depressions that hold water after good rains.

