

Media Release - 10 September 2001

Hike The Tsitsikamma Coast In Luxury

South African National Parks (SANParks) is proud to introduce its first luxury-hiking trail - the Dolphin Trail - along the Tsitsikamma coastline, a beautiful part of the South African Garden Route. The trail has been developed in partnership with three partners from the private sector: Stormsriver Adventures, Misty Mountain Dairy Farm and Forest Ferns Estate.

The trail comprises a two-day, 20 kilometre hike from Forest Ferns on the banks of the Sanddrift River, to the Storm's River Mouth in the Tsitsikamma National Park. The three nights are spent in luxury accommodation in a variety of settings, each offering breathtaking views and atmosphere.

Gourmet dinners, breakfasts, picnic lunches and a forest tea will form part of the all-inclusive package. Trained field guides from *Stormsriver Adventures* will unlock the mysteries of nature and marine life for the hikers, who will be able to cool off in the tidal pools of the Indian Ocean and explore them with snorkelling gear. All luggage will be transported to the overnight spots, so that hikers need carry only a day pack and binoculars.

Guests arriving for the trail will book in at the Tsitsikamma National Park (Storms River Mouth), and will be taken on a scenic drive in a 4 x 4 vehicle along the historic Storms River Pass and over the low water bridge to *Forest Ferns Estate*. Here they will be treated to a tour of the Fernery and a video on the growth and export of ferns. Accommodation at Forest Ferns is in luxury chalets built on the river's edge.

The first day of walking takes hikers through pine plantations and indigenous forests where a forest tea will be served before a breathtaking descent to the sea in the Tsitsikamma National Park. The hike continues along the unspoiled water's edge and most of the day is spent close to the sea. After a brisk climb back onto the escarpment, hikers will be welcomed with an ice cold drink at *Misty Mountain Dairy Farm*. Here the overnight cottages offer a 180-degree view of the Indian Ocean with Robberg and the setting sun in the West.

The second day of the hike is spent mainly on the escarpment among stands of beautiful coastal fynbos. Hikers will have stunning views of the rugged Tsitsikamma coastline and chances are good for spotting a whale or a school of dolphins. The final stage of the walk descends down to Storms River Mouth, which is crossed on the suspension bridge. The *Spirit of the Tsitsikamma* will boat hikers up the incredible Storms River Gorge to where the rapids start. En route, along the very last leg of your trail, is a cave steeped in Khoisan history.

The restaurant at Storms River Mouth will treat you to a farewell dinner with your fellow hikers before your retire for the night to a cosy log cabin on the edge of the Indian Ocean in the heart of the Tsitsikamma National Park.

Reservations can be made at the SANParks reservations office in Pretoria on telephone (012) 426-5111. The all inclusive, introductory rate per person sharing is R2 200.

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