

Families



Samara Private Game Reserve. See p29.

Eastern Cape

Back of the Moon

Treweman Lane, Hogsback (045 962 1017/082 414 7743/www.backofthemoon.hogsback.co.za). Rates R200. No credit cards.

An old cottage that's been added to over the years, Back of the Moon offers a charming, if eccentric, stay in Hogsback. The four-postered main bedroom in this delightful hodge-podge of rooms opens up onto the front veranda, with no direct access to the main house. The cottage sleeps six and offers a fireplace and a bookshelf piled high with books to while away cold mornings and chilly nights. Derek and Norma Fivaz have been welcoming visitors to the cottage for years and they do make you feel very much at home. Derek will come down from the main house to build a fire at dusk to keep you warm through the night. Believe us, you'll need it – don't be surprised if, at certain times of year, you wake up to icy frost and a frozen pond out front.

✓ **Best for Budget**

Bushman Sands

Main Street, Alicedale (042 231 8000/www.riverhotels.co.za/bushmans). Rates R850-R1 060. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V. Alicedale is a blink-and-you'll-miss-it kind of town; the type of place you usually drive through on your way to somewhere else. But you'll want to stop for Bushman Sands. The hotel is a perfect base from which to explore the surrounding area, which holds more than a few unexpected surprises. Children are well catered for – if they're not outside enjoying the fresh air, there are movie nights, golf lessons, a trampoline and other activities for them to enjoy. The hotel's Gary Player-designed golf course is certainly one of the more unusual courses around – a railway line runs through it and a train still comes

past once a day. When you get to the 13th hole, be sure to stop and admire the grave-stones that date back to the 18th century. If golf's not your thing, you can head to the River Spa to be pampered before enjoying dinner and a nightcap in the elegant public areas of the lodge.

✓ **Best for Pampering**

The Edge Mountain Retreat

Bluff End, Hogsback (045 962 1159/www.theedge-hogsback.co.za). Rates R400-R1 200. Credit MC, V.

You'll feel like you're standing on the very edge of the world at The Edge – and you will be, as the cottages dot a cliff face overlooking the area's famous Hogs. Standing on the deck of your comfortable rondavel, the world falls away to reveal views that go on forever. There are various accommodation options here, from the sought-after Cliffside Cottage with its spectacular position and views, to the more modest Over the Edge thatched rondavel. Families can be accommodated in Sugarbird Cottage and Stargazer, both with verandas and indoor fireplaces. Be sure to walk The Edge's famous labyrinth and spend some time enjoying lunch at the restaurant, which serves a delicious lentil soup and a mean dessert pancake.

✓ **Best for Nature-lovers**

Maylodge Country Cottages

4 Dinwiddie Lane, Hogsback (045 962 1016/www.maylodge.co.za). Rates R500-R1 600 per cottage. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V.

Hogsback can be enjoyed in so many different ways: In a group, as you hike the trails to beautiful waterfalls; as a family, looking for fairies in the shaded woods; or as a couple, warming your toes and drinking wine in front of a roaring log fire. The Maylodge Country Cottages offer cosy accommodation for

groups and twosomes. Try out Heron

House, with its spacious kitchen and sunroom for groups of up to eight, or the cosy and romantic Owl House for two. While the cottages are conveniently situated in Hogsback's main street, near the local pubs and restaurants, there's privacy in abundance if you want it.

✓ **Best for Romance, Groups**

Noorspoort Guest Farm

Take the R329 Wolwefontein turn-off from the R75, follow the signs for Noorspoort Guest Farm (049 835 0001/www.noorspoort.co.za). Rates R195-R295. Credit MC, V.

When you step into Noorspoort Guest Farm's main lodge, you step back in time. High ceilings, wooden floors, enormous sash windows and a generous veranda mean luxury accommodation in true old-Karoo style. There are some fantastic walks to be had in the area if you want to get your children outdoors to explore. The historic farm is owned by the sixth generation of the Craven family – Danie Craven Junior now runs the establishment. Book one of the luxurious, generously proportioned suites for the night and then ask to be taken out to Draaikrans for out-of-this-world stargazing into the clearest night sky you've ever seen.

✓ **Best for Budget**

Quin House B&B

5 Suid Street, Alexandria (046 653 0121/www.quin-art.co.za). Rates R220. No credit cards.

Enjoy the art of sculptor Maureen Quin and a pleasant night's sleep at Quin House Bed and Breakfast in Alexandria. Quin is known for her stupefying bronzes – sometimes realistic, sometimes fanciful – that can be appreciated in the sculpture garden, gallery and studio on the property. Staying at Quin House is a great chance to introduce your children

to the work of a truly great South African artist. It also serves as a good base from which to explore the area, including the awe-inspiring Alexandria Dune fields. The homely accommodation includes a full cooked breakfast and comfortable quarters from which to explore. This may be Chicory Country but you can still enjoy a good cup of coffee at Tam' JaZi farm stall just 5km down the road.

✓ **Best for Culture**

Samara Private Game Reserve

From the R75, take the R63 turn-off to Somerset East, turn left onto the Petersburg gravel road (049 891 0558/www.samara.co.za). Rates R1 500-R4 800. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V.

Samara Private Game Reserve offers a wonderful family experience in the Great Karoo. Children are specifically catered for and are bound to have the holiday of their lives. The Aardvark Programme includes everything budding conservationists will love, covering orienteering, tracking and spoor identification, and tree planting. African bead crafts and face painting are also offered and there's a babysitting service at night, should you need it. It's not only children who will be enthralled, however, as the reserve offers well-preserved Khoisan painting, and lucky sightings of cheetah and rhino on safaris across the plains of the Camdeboo. A luxurious spa and colonial-style accommodation completes the package.

✓ **Best for Luxury**

Wholesome Market

Kragga Kamma Road (083 777 5701/www.wholesomemarket.moonfruit.com). Open 10am-3pm first Sat of every month (special markets planned for public holidays). No credit cards.

Whether you are in search of fresh produce, taste-bud tweakers and delicacies, or a wide

variety of crafts and arts for all ages, you will find it at the indoor and outdoor Wholesome Market. The open field and jumping castle offer children plenty of chance to romp, not to mention face-painting, sand-art activities and loads of delicious treats. Bring a picnic blanket or find a bench and simply enjoy the fresh country air, a wholesome lunch and refreshing thirst quencher (bar available) of your choice. Rain or shine, live music and the Wholesome Happenings initiative provide a platform for local talent. Top off this family outing with a stroll across the field to Homeleigh Farm to feed the animals.

✓ **Best for Relaxation**

Zuurberg Mountain Village

Take the R335 Motherwell/Markman turn-off from the N2 to Addo. (042 233 8300/www.addo.co.za).

Rates R725-R1 025. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V.

Like many ladies who reach a certain age, the Zuurberg Mountain Village has had a facelift and it's done her the world of good. Families can find comfortable accommodation in the Zuurberg Manor. This grand old dame is part of the original Zuurberg Mountain Inn, dating back to 1861. Couples looking for child-free tranquillity can book in at the Edwardian Village Cottages. These have spectacular mountain and valley views, blackwood flooring, under-floor heating and patios to both the east and west. The hotel is best enjoyed in winter, when log fires are lit in the old stone fireplace and the mists roll in over the hills.

✓ **Best for Romance**

KwaZulu-Natal

Ardmore Guest Farm

Champagne Valley, off the R600 from Winterton (036 468 1314/www.ardmore.co.za). Rates R495-R565. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V.

Feel right at home at this secluded farmhouse retreat with dramatic views of the Champagne Castle mountains. The working timber farm offers fishing in a well-stocked bass dam, as well as a craft centre featuring traditional and modern Zulu Amangwe beadwork and basketwork, along with woven designs from African Loom.

The whole family will enjoy various activities in the surrounding countryside, including horse-riding, mountain-biking and hiking trails. Children will also love the farm-yard experience: ducks and geese wander freely and cows and goats graze in the nearby fields. The rustic accommodation is in comfortable three-bedroom thatched rondavels or mountain-view cottages, with fireplaces in all rooms and sizeable en-suite bathrooms. Home-cooked meals at the main lodge feature farm-grown organic vegetables and, after sharing a table with amiable hosts Paul and Sue Ross, you'll leave as friends.

✓ **Best for Home comforts**

Bush Willow

Kuleni Game Park, from N2 to Hluhluwe turn left to Sodwana Bay, 16km after railway line (035 562 0473/083 651 6777/www.bushwillow.com). Rates R995-R3 000 self-catering. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V.

This is a delightful hideaway for families or for escaping with friends; even the name conjures up an image of tranquillity in the bush. Parties of six can book out the whole lodge and self cater, or individual parties can book rooms with superb dinners and breakfasts included. Alfresco meals on the large deck overlooking the lodge's small watering hole often include sightings of small animals and many birds. In the heart of Kuleni Game Park, which encompasses 1,5km² of indigenous sand forest, this oasis is a nature lover's haven, where self-guided walking trails offer encounters with an abundance of birdlife, diverse flora and even zebra, giraffe, wildebeest, impala and nyala. Open 4x4 drives to nearby Hluhluwe Game Reserve and boat trips on St Lucia Estuary in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park can be arranged.

✓ **Best for Eco-friendliness**

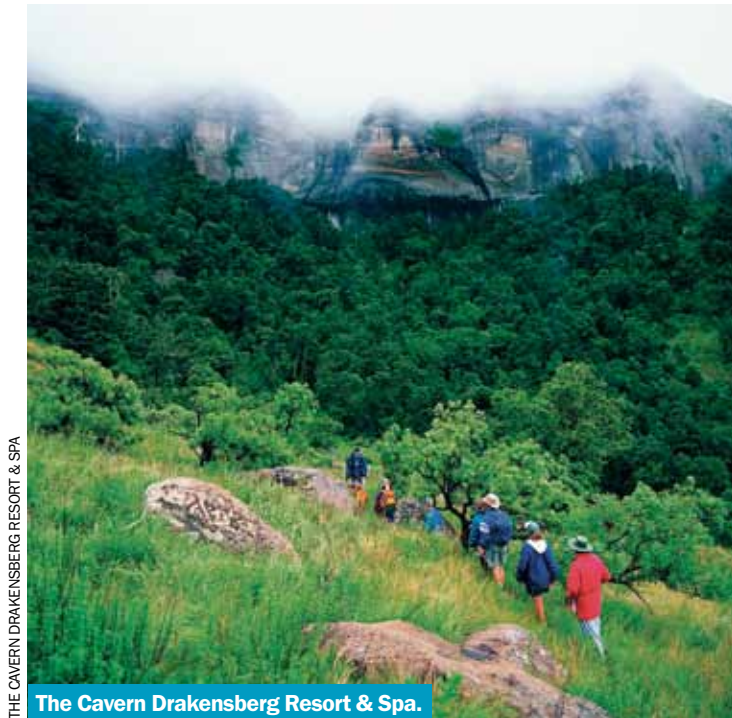
The Cavern Drakensberg Resort & Spa

From the N3, drive towards Bergville, take turn-off to Northern Berg Resorts (036 438 6270/www.cavern.co.za). Rates R790-R1 090. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V.

This is the original family resort. Situated on 30km² of private mountain reserve adjacent to the Royal Natal National Park Amphitheatre in the Northern Drakensberg, it's been owner-managed by the Carte family for over 60 years. Activities abound for adults and children, from hiking, horse-riding, swimming and fishing, to croquet, picnicking and paddling in streams. Local guides accompany guests on short walks or more challenging hikes, visiting numerous beauty spots where tea and snacks are provided. Accommodation is in standard and superior rooms, or in

BUSH BREAK ON A BUDGET

Ezenvelo KZN Wildlife protects and sustains its natural sanctuaries in 68 diverse destinations, 36 with affordable accommodation. (www.kznwildlife.com)



The Cavern Drakensberg Resort & Spa.

THE CAVERN DRAKENSBERG RESORT & SPA