

## Phantom Forest Eco Reserve: Where Luxury Meets Ecology

Nestled in the hills above Knysna (pronounced 'nighs-na') on South Africa's Garden Route is a lodge that blends luxury accommodation with environmental responsibility. It's called the Phantom Forest, and it's unique.

### The Phantom Forest Eco Reserve

Privately owned, within a 137 hectare nature reserve, on the Knysna River, the Phantom Forest Eco Reserve opened in November 1998. It offers a unique biodiversity of Afromontane Indigenous Forest, Cape Coastal Fynbos and Estuarine Wetland. There are 120 bird species, bushbuck, the rare blue duiker, grysbok, bushpig and many varieties of smaller game.

Using only sustainable building materials and drawing inspiration from nature a harmonious balance has been created from thatch that rises into the forest canopy, to hand-crafted wood shingle and fynbos-planted roofs from meandering boardwalks to a fresh-water natural pool.

The Phantom Forest consists of 14 wooden 'tree suites', set well apart from each other, allowing for a complete sense of privacy. Each suite includes a bedroom, living area, deck and en-suite bathroom. The rooms are exquisitely appointed with hand-crafted furnishings, ethnic artefacts, queen-sized beds with percale sheets and mosquito nets, a bath tub (large enough for two), and a double-headed shower. The lodge was constructed with conservation in mind. No trees were removed to make way for the suites, instead the design was adapted to the native foliage. Buildings were constructed using alien vegetation, cleared by hand to create the flooring, chairs, tables, doors, etc. Organically grown produce for the meals is purchased from small local growers. Biodegradable cleaning products are used and water recycled through the lodge's sewage plant, pumped to reed beds and filtered back into the ground as clean, re-usable water.

At Phantom Forest your car stays at the base of the hill on which the lodge is constructed. You and your luggage are transported by Land Rover up the steep hill to the reception area, where you are greeted and escorted to your suite. After relaxing on your private you may dress for dinner and enjoy a sundowner in the rustic bar. Dinner is a leisurely seven-course event which ends with coffee and African music round the campfire on the fire deck. At bedtime you may stroll down the boardwalk to your suite and enjoy a soak in your huge bath tub to the sounds of the monkeys and birds in the trees that surround your room.

The lodge offers a range of amenities: pool, hot tub, sauna, spa, restaurant serving spectacular meals and the romantic fire deck under the stars. Everything within the lodge is connected by wooden boardwalks that meander through the forest, minimising the impact of foot traffic on the pristine environment. The helpful staff organise a variety of activities that include hiking, cycling, paragliding, sailing, horse riding and canoeing.

A stay at Phantom Forest Lodge is a marvellous experience offering a satisfying balance of luxury and ecological accord. This is not an inexpensive venture but it is well worth the price. You will leave the lodge relaxed, refreshed and content.

### Phantom Forest: Some interesting facts

The Phantom Forest Project within a private nature reserve consisting of three biospheres of Afromontane Forest, Cape Coastal Fynbos and Estuarine wetland and continuing conservation is run and funded through a Trust. The trust is a model of preservation of an area of natural beauty, with trustees including Phantom Forest and a professional member of Cape Nature Conservation, the future of the reserve is guaranteed.

All electrical cables, water pipes etc. run under the boardwalks. Sewage pipes lie on the forest floor and are painted to minimise visual impact. Our policy of 'touch the earth lightly' is taken literally here! Over one kilometre of boardwalk minimises any impact on the ecology of the forest and we often see wildlife using the boardwalks to get around their own habitat!

Conventional construction methods were used outside of the fragile area, for the swimming pools, part of the Eyrie and Chutzpah. The construction teams were trained in innovative methods, over a number of years, sending new skills out into the community. This is a on-going process as we are constantly maintaining or clearing other areas of alien vegetation by buying in baby Wattle and Blackwood to replace those removed.

#### Phantom Forest Guests May Enjoy ...

Sundowners at the 'Eyrie', the reserve's social hub, are accompanied by spectacular sunsets and views all the way to the famous Knysna Heads a view shared only with our resident Fish Eagles. Indulge in award-winning international cuisine served in the thatched Boma.

The unique bio-diversity of forest, fynbos and estuarine wetland may be explored on foot or by bike or canoe. We recommend the Forest Walk, followed by a relaxing soak in the Bubble Barrel or a steamy session in the Sauna.

The Body Boma, the stress release centre, is in perfect synergy with Phantom Forest's nature concept. It is situated on the Forest edge with glorious views over the lagoon and estuary. Here you will be pampered with relaxing, healing treatments and massages designed to soothe away the stresses of modern urban living.

The Chutzpah offers Moroccan style dining, a feast for the senses and soul. This is an informal, Moroccan style restaurant and pool with intoxicating aromas and colourful décor. Chutzpah is open for special occasions and functions for 12 or more guests. The Chutzpah pays tribute to North African cuisine, offering the perfect blend of fiery flavours, tagines, dates, Turkish delight, hookahs, mosaics and illuminated screens make for an unforgettable dining experience!

**BODY BOMA:** Please refer to our website for Treatment details. It is essential to book treatments in advance.

**CANOE FACILITIES:** We have 5 double Canadian style canoes, on the banks of the Knysna River, within our reserve. Guests are transported and supplied with towels, life jackets and an optional picnic lunch that may be ordered in advance. The river is tidal so it is advisable to check the directional flow before venturing out. (Tide table available at reception). Average time of canoeing varies, from 1 - 2 hours or perhaps 3 hours with a picnic lunch. There is no charge for canoes.

**BUBBLE BARREL/SAUNA:** Book at reception. There is no charge; however, we do ask guests to limit their time to an hour. Towels are provided. Operation of both sauna and barrel will be explained a reservation is made.

**FOREST WALK:** This downhill walk meandering on the forest floor through the stunning Afromontane Forest, takes approximately 45 minutes to the Gatehouse and Parking area. Birders' heaven!

**MOUNTAIN BIKES:** We have 4 mountain bikes for our guests to enjoy. These bikes are for leisure use only, information regarding suggested routes or guided forest trails available at reception when booking is made.

**SWIMMING POOLS:** The pools are unheated and eco-friendly. Refreshments and light lunches are available in the Eyrie leisure area.

### The Phantom Forest Philosophy

To provide guests with a unique experience that will stay with them forever. We believe in going the extra mile for every guest and we offer exceptional service with the little touches and thoughtfulness that make a world of difference. Our guests will remember Phantom Forest and wish to come back, time after time.

The Phantom Forest Eco Reserve's eco-sensitivity has earned it several accolades including 'Africa's Best Eco Tourism Destination' in 2007, the 'World's Leading Green Resort' in 2008 and the 2009 nomination for 'Africa's Leading Green Hotel' in the World Travel Awards.

Phantom Forest Lodge is located seven kilometres west of Knysna, at the foot of the Phantom Pass.

For more information, go to: [www.phantomforest.com](http://www.phantomforest.com)

A thought to ponder:

Green principles and sustainability are becoming essential elements in our polluted world. A tree should be planted somewhere in an exchange of CFC's for each traveller on an aircraft.