



**KAROO HIGHWAYS TOURISM PROJECT
CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
Project Outline**

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Tourism in the Karoo

The Karoo is a vast arid area in the hinterland of four provinces: the Western Cape, the Northern Cape, the Eastern Cape, and the Free State. In each of the four provinces, it is an economically neglected zone, and development effort is diverted away, towards the coastlines and the capital cities. This has the unintended consequence of intensifying poverty in these areas, or encouraging out-migration to the cities.

The purpose of this project is to develop the latent economic potential of the Greater Karoo, so that it can influence future government planning and expenditures. One of its potential assets is "desert tourism", based on nature reserves, agri-tourism, small-town Victorian architecture, crafts, and heritage (palaeontology and Khoisan paintings). The 2010 FIFA World Cup anticipates that 1.3 million tourists will visit South African host cities. The Karoo is located between three host cities – Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein. Consequently, there is significant tourism potential to attract international and South African visitors to spend time in the Karoo and to explore its fascinating desert environment.

The project will interact with private and public sector role-players to co-ordinate their 2010 tourism strategies. Tourists who plan to attend FIFA soccer matches will travel between host cities. We aim to encourage such travelers to get out of the planes and instead enjoy overland travel through the Great Karoo. *En route*, they can enjoy the hospitality, crafts and cuisine of this remote and romantic region.

Six Karoo routes have been identified:

1. The Great Karoo Route
2. The Little Karoo Route
3. The Camdeboo Route
4. The Sundays River Route
5. The Hantam Route
6. The Green Kalahari Route.

The project will promote collaboration between provinces, districts and local municipalities. It will include:

- (1) Effective municipal participation in local tourism development along the six Karoo routes
- (2) Regional (cross-provincial and cross-district) tourism planning and co-ordination, to secure economies of scale along the six Karoo routes
- (3) The creation of new tourism services and products in the arid areas, by responding to new types of tourism demand

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- (4) Promoting the involvement of previously marginalised communities in tourism – in particular, crafts projects and heritage experiences
- (5) Promoting employment creation in Karoo towns through tourism, and
- (6) Promoting collaboration between municipalities and the private sector.

The project will be implemented by the Karoo Development Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation operating in all four Karoo provinces (Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Free State). The Foundation emerged from the Arid Areas Research Programme (www.aridareas.co.za), which identified the need for new knowledge, research and information to be generated about the Karoo, Kalahari and Namaqualand. Such knowledge products need to be fed back to Karoo entrepreneurs, to promote the development of this arid region.

The Karoo Development Foundation, in partnership with several universities, hosted the first Karoo Development Conference and Trade Fair in Graaff-Reinet, on 25-27 March 2009. In particular, the Foundation works in close collaboration with the Centre for Development Support at the University of the Free State, and the Heartland and Karoo Institute.

The Foundation can be contacted at:

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THE KAROO ROUTES

Six key routes have been identified, which will enable 2010 soccer fans to travel between the host cities of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Kimberley.

1. The Great Karoo Route: N1 highway (from Cape Town to Bloemfontein)

This route has two main clusters: The southern cluster around Beaufort West, and the northern cluster around Gariep Dam.

Provinces	Districts	Municipalities	Towns	
Western Cape	Cape Winelands	Breede River	Worcester	Richmond
Northern Cape	Central Karoo	Beaufort West	De Doorns	Hanover
Eastern Cape	Pixley ka Seme	Laingsburg	Touws River	Colesberg
Free State	Ukhahlamba	Prince Albert	Matjiesfontein	Gariep Dam
	Xhariep	Ubuntu	Sutherland	Oviston
		Emthanjeni	Laingsburg	Philippolis
		Umsobomvu	Leeu-Gamka	Bethulie
		Gariep	Beaufort West	
		Kopanong	Prince Albert	
			Fraserburg	

This route's key attractions are:

- The Karoo Botanical Garden in Worcester
- The Laingsburg Flood Museum
- The romantic Victorian town of Matjiesfontein
- The Large Telescope (SALT) in Sutherland
- The Karoo National Park in Beaufort West
- The Chris Barnard Museum in Beaufort West
- The heritage and culinary arts of Prince Albert
- The Richmond Booktown,
- The Xhariep Dam, and
- The historical Griqua republic in Philippolis.

Attractive craft shops, coffee shops, guest houses and B&Bs are found in various towns such as De Doorns, Leeu-Gamka, Three Sisters, Hanover, and Colesberg.



2. The Little Karoo Route: The east-west Route 62 between Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein

This route meanders across the Little Karoo desert, along the Swartberg and Kammanassie mountains. It encounters charming agricultural villages, wine farms, and the ostrich feather empires of the Oudtshoorn area. It then passes the astonishing Baviaanskloof Mega-Reserve, where travellers can experience pristine mountain landscapes and wildlife.

Provinces	Districts	Municipalities	Towns	
Western Cape Eastern Cape	Cape Winelands Eden DM Overberg DM Cacadu DM	Breede River Swellendam Kannaland Oudtshoorn Eden District Management Area (Uniondale) Cacadu District Management Area (Aberdeen Plain), Baviaans Cacadu	Montagu Barrydale Ladismith Zoar Amalienstein Calitzdorp Oudtshoorn	De Rust Uniondale Willowmore Aberdeen Steytlerville Rietbron Klipplaat

The must-see sites along this route include:

- Montagu and Ladismith's hot springs
- Oudtshoorn Cango Caves
- The Meerkat Magic project north of Oudtshoorn
- The Baviaanskloof Mega Reserve, and
- The Karroo Hotel cabaret in Steytlerville.

A wide variety of craft shops and restaurants are found at Montagu, Barrydale, Calitzdorp, Ladismith, Oudtshoorn, De Rust, Uniondale, Willowmore, and Aberdeen.

3. The Camdeboo Route: R75 and N9 and N1 between Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein

This route heads from Port Elizabeth to the "Gem of the Karoo" at Graaff-Reinet, and on towards Lake Xhariep.

Provinces	Districts	Municipalities	Towns
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Eastern Cape Northern Cape Free State	Cacadu Chris Hani Ukhahlamba Pixley ka Seme Xhariep	Nelson Mandela Metro (Uitenhage) Sundays River Valley Ikwezi LM Camdeboo Inxuba Yethemba Umsobomvu Kopanong	Uitenhage Kirkwood Jansenville Graaff-Reinet Nieu Bethesda	Middelburg Noupoort Colesberg Gariiep Dam
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Some of the must-see stops on this route are:

- The Karoo Hotel cabaret in Steytlerville
- Graaff-Reinet's Valley of Desolation, museums, craft shops and restaurants
- The Owl House in New Bethesda
- The fossil museums at New Bethesda and Ganora Farm
- Lake Xhariep and the dam wall
- The Griqua republic at Philippolis.

Interesting coffee shops and craft outlets are found at Jansenville, Middelburg and Colesberg.

4. The Sundays River Route: N10 and N1 between Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein

This route explores the eastern rim of the Great Karoo, with key stops at Somerset East, Cradock and Oviston on the Lake Xhariep.

Provinces	Districts	Municipalities	Towns	
Eastern Cape Free State	Cacadu Chris Hani Ukhahlamba Xhariep	Sundays River Valley Blue Crane Route Inxuba Yethemba Tsolwana Gariiep Kopanong	Addo Paterson Cookhouse Somerset East Cradock	Hofmeyr Steynsburg Oviston Gariiep Dam

Key sites to visit are the Karoo town-houses of Cradock and the beautiful lakeside settlement of Oviston. Other attractions are the Walter Batiss Gallery in Somerset East, the Daggaboer Road Stall north of Cookhouse, the craft shops of Hofmeyr and Steynsburg.

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5. The Hantam Route

This Route includes Namaqualand, along the West Coast (N7), and then due east via Calvinia to Victoria West (R27 and R63), then north to Hopetown on the Orange River (N12), and then east again, across the southern Free State to Bloemfontein.

The route is renowned for the desert flowers of Namaqualand, the new telescope in Carnarvon, and the classic Victorian towns of the upper Karoo.

An alternative route is to proceed north from Hopetown to the city of Kimberley, which will function as a base camp centre during the FIFA tournament.

Provinces	Districts	Municipalities	Towns	
Western Cape Northern Cape Free State	Namakwa Pixley ka Seme Xhariep	Kamiesberg Hantam Karoo-Hoogland Kareeberg Ubuntu Emthanjeni Thembelihle Letsemeng Kopanong	Kamieskroon Garies Hondeklip Bay Vanrhynsdorp Nieuwoudtville Calvinia Williston Carnarvon Loxton Vosburg Victoria West	Britstown Strydenburg Hopetown Orania Vanderkloof Phillipstown Petrusville Luckhoff Koffiefontein Jagersfontein Fauresmith

During spring, the Namaqualand flower splendour of Garies, Kamieskroon and Springbok are a must-see. But other seasons also have interesting sites to visit, such as the remote fishing village of Hondeklip Bay and the desert mountain village of Leliefontein. Further inland, Nieuwoudtville's waterfall and indigenous plant reserve enable visitors to experience the extraordinary flower bulb richness of this mountainous area. Other key sites on this route are:

- The giant post box and the Hantam House in Calvinia
- The Square Kilometer Array telescope at Carnarvon
- The Art Deco cinema in Victoria West
- The Orania Afrikaner village on the banks of the Orange River
- The big diamond mine hole in Jagersfontein.

6. The Green Kalahari Route

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This route includes the N7 on the West Coast, and the N14 to Johannesburg via Upington. Its key feature is the wide expanse of vineyards along the Orange River, creating a splash of green in a brown desert.

Provinces	Districts	Municipalities	Towns	
Northern Cape	Namakwa Siyanda	Khai Ma LM Kai !Garib //Khara Hais Mier Ga-Segonyana	Garies Kamieskroon Springbok Port Nolloth Okiep Kommaggas Hondeklip Bay Pofadder	Pella Augrabies Keimoes Kakamas Upington Rietfontein (Kalahari) Kuruman

Along the West Coast, the key attractions are the desert flower displays in springtime, as well as fishing and mountain villages in the remote Namaqualand desert.

Once the traveller heads east from Springbok, the Orange River becomes the artery giving life to the vineyards of Keimoes, Kakamas and Upington. The following sites are key attractions:

- The desert cathedral at Pella
- The Augrabies waterfall
- Beyond Keimoes and Kakamas are the vineyards of the Green Kalahari, along the banks of the Orange River.

Further north, the Kalahari region called "Mier" is a wooded desert region, and further east, the Moffatt Mission Museum near Kuruman offer distinctive African attractions.

The way forward

The project will take place in the following stages:

1. Assessment phase: What craft production, marketing and co-ordination activities are already taking place along the Routes?
2. Creation of a Karoo Crafts Co-operative, to distribute Karoo products throughout the Karoo
3. Design of a Karoo Highways Website
4. Design of a Karoo Highways guide book
5. Interaction with tourism agents to market the Karoo Highways.

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