

## Otter Trail

SA's iconic Otter Trail, the 5-day trek along perhaps the most beautiful stretch of coastline in the world, the Garden Route, has been listed as the very best hiking trail on the globe.

This is according to [Insight Guides](#), listing our epic trail alongside other big hikes such as the Pacific Crest Trail or PCT which spans the US, as well as the Annapurna Circuit Trek in Nepal. The list has been put together by the travel agencies' local experts, who warn that the ocean vistas seen from the secret nooks of the beloved Otter Trail will leave your jaw on the ground.



It is also the oldest hiking trail in South Africa, having been inaugurated in 1968.

The Otter Trail follows the Eastern Cape coastline from Storms River Mouth to Natures Valley in the Tsitsikamma National Park. The trail is 42.5km long hike takes five days to complete as it follows the rocky shoreline ranging in elevation from sea level to a height of more than 150m.



## **General Information**

- Due to the physical demands of the Otter Trail, the following age restrictions are in place: Minimum age 12 years; maximum age 65 years.
- Check in: Allow some time to weigh your bag and watch the 20 minute Otter Trail DVD at the Otter Room next to the Storms River Reception building. The Otter Trail DVD provides a brief outline of changes recently made to the trail.
- Check out: Compulsory check out at De Vasselot Rest Camp where Otter Trail certificates will be issued.

## **Distances and Durations**

The trail is 5 days and 4 nights. The following distances and durations are as follows:

- Day 1 = 4.8km ( $\pm$  2 hours)
- Day 2 = 7.9km ( $\pm$  4 hours)
- Day 3 = 7.7km ( $\pm$  4 hours)
- Day 4 = 13.8km ( $\pm$  6 hours)
- Day 5 = 10.8km ( $\pm$  5 hours)
- Total Distance = 45km

## **Water**

There are numerous streams and springs throughout the length of the Otter Trail that are suitable for drinking purposes. Please note though that water from the Kleinbos River is not suitable for drinking (2nd day of trail). However, it may be wise to use purification tablets especially if you are not used to this water and where streams/rivers pass through communities such as the Coldstream/Witels River (3.6km mark of the 4th day) and the Lottering River (7.5km mark of the 4th day). There are rainwater tanks at each overnight hut that may also be used. However, due to erratic rainfall patterns, the level of these tanks may be low from time to time. Water quality is monitored on a quarterly basis.

## **Firewood**

Firewood is provided, however it is not covered from rain and therefore may be wet. Hikers are required to carry their share of wood from a woodpile, close by on the trail. However, it sometimes happens that there is a buildup of excess wood not used by previous hikers that is placed under the steps of the huts, which is usually dry.

## **Cooking facilities**

Each hut has a braai place with a sturdy steel grid. Within each hut there is a table on which food can be prepared. Hikers need to provide their own gas stoves and pots for cooking.

## **Other Facilities**

There are two huts and a single toilet at each overnight stop. Each of the two huts contains 6 beds with mattresses – hikers must provide their own blankets/pillows/sleeping bags etc. Rubbish bins are

provided at each of the overnight stops. Field rangers remove the rubbish regularly. There are benches present. Please only use biodegradable soaps on the trail. Hikers are not permitted to remove mattresses from the huts.

### **Tides**

It is important to be aware of the dates and the times of the high and low tides prior to hiking the Otter Trail. This is especially important when it comes to crossing the bigger rivers such as the Elandsbos and the Bloukrans Rivers. It is the hiker's responsibility to obtain tide tables in order to prepare for their hike.

### **The Bloukrans River Crossing**

The Bloukrans River crossing is on the 4th day of the Otter Trail. It is approximately 10km from Oakhurst Hut that takes about four and half hours (4.5) to reach. This river is best crossed during low tide. Once the river has been crossed it is approximately another 3.8km (two and a half hours) to the next overnight stop. It is wise to arrive well before low tide, so that enough time is available to plan your crossing. If you are unable to cross the river, you can take the escape route labeled E6. This escape route branches to the right of the trail just before the Otter Trail descends to the Bloukrans River Mouth. The escape route climbs steeply to the top of the plateau. In the case of an emergency, hikers are advised to make their way to the top of the escape route and wait for collection by SANParks Rangers once contact has been made. Do not attempt to walk to the N2.



### **Safety precautions**

Safety items that can be included are the following:

- Small First Aid kit
- Survival Bag
- Thermal blanket
- Map of Trail
- Cellphone
- Rope

### **Cell Phones and Reception**

It is advisable that a cellphone is taken together with the following numbers:

- SANParks Rangers:  
Day 1 – 4: 072 917 5079  
Day 5 – 6: 072 917 4474
- Storms River Police - 10111
- Park Headquarters - (042) 28 11 607

There is no cell phone reception along the Otter Trail. In the case of an emergency, hikers are advised to make their way to the top of the escape route where cell phone reception is available.

### **Emergency procedures**

Escape routes are only to be taken in the case of an emergency. The escape routes are indicated as E 1 - 6 on the map. Cell phone reception may be reached at the top of the escape route. Hikers are to contact SANParks Rangers immediately upon reaching the top of the escape route and should then wait at the entrance to the escape route for collection.

### **Otter Trail Reservations**

- Telephone: +27 (0) 12 426 5111
- Fax: +27 (0) 12 343 0905