

Lekkerwater Beach Lodge: Frequently Asked Questions

WHERE IS LEKKERWATER AND WHAT DOES IT OFFER?

Lekkerwater Beach Lodge is situated in the De Hoop Nature Reserve, the Western Cape's premier coastal reserve, located halfway between Cape Town and George / Knysna. This 34,000-hectare reserve and its Marine Protected Area offshore is one of the hidden gems of the Western Cape with its pristine and unique blend of fynbos, beaches, rolling hills, deep ravines, caves and dunes all framed by the dramatic Potberg Mountains and the Indian Ocean.

A visit to Lekkerwater is an adventure into the easternmost and more remote sector of the De Hoop Reserve. With incredible fauna and flora, pristine beaches, abundant sea life and a rich & fascinating history, our focus is on offering a comfortable and distinctive beach and fynbos destination away from the crowds.

The experience and activities offered at Lekkerwater Lodge focuses on the outdoors and the area's natural beauty, its fabulous 5km stretch of pristine beach and the rich marine life that exists along this stretch of coast in the intertidal zone that gets exposed at every low tide. Lekkerwater is at the heart of the De Hoop Bay which enjoys some of the highest concentrations of whales during the whale-watching season between July and November and a rich concentration of dolphins and other marine life year-round.

WHY DOES LEKKERWATER HAVE SET ARRIVAL DAYS?

Lekkerwater works on set arrival days every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday every week. The lodge and its location are packed with stories – historical, environmental, marine life and more. Lekkerwater works best when guests arrive together and enjoy the same unfolding experiences through similar eyes. A strong sense of camaraderie develops through these shared experiences. We understand that the set arrival days can be an inconvenience to itinerary planning, but our past guests have found that the benefits gained from everyone arriving on set arrival days are immensely positive.

HOW LONG SHOULD WE STAY?

While the set arrival days every Monday, Wednesday and Friday results in 2, 2 and 3 night stays. longer stays can be accommodated. We feel that a 3 to 4 night stay is optimal for Lekkerwater if you enjoy the outdoors. If you opt for a longer stay, please note that some hosted/guided activities could be recurring and you would need to be comfortable with repeating or doing your own self guided activities or else spending more time relaxing on the beach, in the lodge or around the environs. We do have requests for one night stays which we decline because a one night stay does not do justice to the remoteness of the destination, the travelling time and the overall experience.

HOW LONG DO I NEED FOR CONNECTING FLIGHTS INTO & OUT OF CAPE TOWN AIRPORT?

If you are flying into Cape Town Airport and planning to drive to the lodge, please allow for at least 4,5 hours from the landing of your flight to your arrival at Lekkerwater Lodge. If you want to make the entrance gate to De Hoop Reserve by closing time at 4pm you will need to arrive at Cape Town Airport by no later than 11.30am. As the Potberg gate to De Hoop only opens at 0730 each morning, the earliest flight that you can take out of Cape Town Airport is a 1pm for a local flight or a 2pm for an international flight. If this is not possible then consider a helicopter arrival or making special arrangements with CapeNature via us. NB: Helicopters can only take off and land in daylight hours.

WHAT ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES DOES LEKKERWATER PROVIDE?

Because of strict environmental legislation and the resultant small development footprint permitted on this site, Lekkerwater has only seven guest bedrooms. Six are double (or twin) bedded stand-alone bedrooms that are 41 square meters in size. All have unobstructed views onto the ocean and beaches. It is possible to watch dolphins and whales from every bed! The larger family room is 80 square meters and is primarily reserved for families with younger children.

Each guest bedroom has a private veranda, wood burning room heater, coffee and tea making facilities and an open plan shower & vanity area.

All bedrooms have two three quarter extra length beds that can be made up as two large single beds or joined to make one super king size (and super-comfortable) bed. The beds are made up as super kings, unless specifically requested otherwise. 220V charging facilities are available in all bedrooms.

WHAT IS INCLUDED AND EXCLUDED?

Lekkerwater tries to be as all-inclusive as possible. Our tariff includes the 6km return transfers between the Lekkerwater car park and the lodge; the lodge's guided activities and all meals from afternoon tea on the arrival day to a hearty breakfast on the day of departure. Our prices also include most "local" drinks in reasonable quantities including a variety of soft drinks, beers, a choice of house wines, sparkling wine and a selection of gins & local spirits. It does not include shooters, single malts, tequila, French champagne etc. We also have a selection of premium wines from the region available at an additional cost. Should guests abuse the lodge's free drink offerings and consume an 'unreasonable' quantity of drinks, they will be billed accordingly. If you are celebrating a special occasion and / or wish to bring your own premium drinks, single malts, tequila and French champagnes, you are welcome to do so and no corkage will be charged. As our check-in time at the Lekkerwater car park on your arrival day is at 2pm we offer savouries on arrival that afternoon – but not lunch.

Excluded is the cost of getting to and from Lekkerwater's car park; premier brand drinks; wines on our reserve list; discretionary gratuities to staff and guides; Cape Nature Park entrance fees of R50 per person per night and R30 per child per night (must be paid in cash at the Park entrance gate on arrival) and comprehensive travel insurance. Lodge extras can be paid by either Visa or MasterCard on check-out.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE OFFERED AT LEKKERWATER?

We offer an integrated hosted experience at Lekkerwater Lodge. This means that we do not have a long list of activities available for guests to pick and choose from each day, but specialise on guided and educational experiences that highlight what the area and the local reefs have to offer. Our activities are focused on the fynbos as well as the pristine coastline and involve mainly exploring the area on foot – its rolling hills, deep gorges, caves, ravines and around low tide, the rich intertidal zone on the exposed reefs along this stretch of coastline. In addition, there are a range of self-guided walking trails available of different difficulty and distances. As we are in the heart of a thriving Marine Protected Area no surfing, boating, or fishing is permitted. You can however explore the rock pools and view the marine life with masks and snorkels. Lekkerwater is also a great place to decompress, relax and absorb the surroundings from the lodge, in the 'sala', from the hot tub or on the beach. With its rugged mountainous terrain, the area around Lekkerwater is not your typical game drive terrain so if you are wanting to go out on morning and afternoon game drives, then its best to visit a specialist game reserve.

HOW DO I GET TO LEKKERWATER?

The drive to Lekkerwater Beach Lodge takes around 3 hours 45 minutes from Cape Town via Caledon & Bredasdorp and a little over 4 hours from George, depending on the time of day and the traffic. Please add time for a meal and a refuelling stop (Bredasdorp or Swellendam are your last refuelling opportunities). Please note that the last 57km to the Lekkerwater Car Park is on gravel roads and the condition of this road varies day to day depending on the weather and the traffic. The road within the De Hoop Reserve from the Potberg Gate to the Lekkerwater car park is fine for regular saloon vehicles, provided that you drive slowly and carefully. Travelling in a low bodied vehicle such as a sports car or a vehicle with low profile tyres is not recommended. If you are renting a vehicle or booking a chauffeur drive and have a choice of vehicle, it would be preferable to rent an SUV.

Google Maps has marked Lekkerwater Beach Lodge, remembering that your destination is not at the lodge, but is 6km inland to Lekkerwater's well signposted car park. We cannot take private vehicles at Lekkerwater Lodge due to very rough last 6km long access road over the hill and the limited parking space at the Lodge. The car park has trees for shade and is located inside the Reserve.

Guests will be transferred from Lekkerwater's car park to the lodge in the lodge's 4x4 Toyota Landcruiser, Land Rover or Double Cab as per the 2pm pickup time provided (or at another time on prior arrangement).

PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU RECEIVE & READ OUR DETAILED DRIVING INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE DEPARTURE.

CAN ONE FLY TO LEKKERWATER?

Whilst most guests drive to Lekkerwater, helicopter transfers are an exciting alternative option to get to the lodge (especially in whale season and for guests arriving in Cape Town Airport later in the day). It is a fabulous hour & a half scenic flight from Cape Town with the landing spot for helicopters around 200m to the east of the lodge. The nearest airfield for fixed wing aircraft is in the western sector of the De Hoop Reserve, around an hour and half drive away from Lekkerwater making this option impractical. For a helicopter quote contact Cape Town Helicopters 021 4189462

WHAT ARE DE HOOP RESERVE'S GATE OPENING AND CLOSING TIMES?

CapeNature manages the De Hoop Reserve and the Potberg entrance gate that takes you to Lekkerwater. The gate opening time is 07:30am and it closes sharply at 4 pm. If you are late or need the gate opened earlier, this will need to be facilitated in advance with Cape Nature and if possible, there will be a surcharge payable. Please note that the Cape Nature Park entrance fee is currently R50 per adult per night or R30 per child per night, payable in CASH on arrival at the Park gate. This entry fee is not included in your tariff. The entrance gate does not have credit card facilities.

WHAT ARE LEKKERWATER'S CHECK IN & CHECK OUT TIMES?

The scheduled collection time at the Lekkerwater Car Park is 2pm. This car park is located 6km inland from the lodge. We ask guests to arrive at the car park as close to 2pm as possible so that you are not kept waiting or keep others waiting. Our check out time from Lekkerwater Lodge is at 10:15 am to be back at the car park at around 11:00 am. Due to the remote location of the Lodge and transfers to/from the car park, together with our COVID cleaning protocols, we are unable to assist with early check-ins or a late check-out. If you have time to spare, there are some lovely quirky spots to stop for lunch en-route in Napier, Bredasdorp or Swellendam or if you are very early, you can explore the western side of the De Hoop reserve. The western sector of De Hoop Reserve is accessible to the public via the reserve's main (western) gate that is located around 10km to the west of the Potberg entrance gate.

IS THE LODGE SUITABLE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN?

We welcome children aged 6 years and older. Please note that we do not offer childminding facilities. If you have young children, it is your responsibility to ensure their whereabouts and safety. Lekkerwater has an unfenced swimming pool & high drop-off area.

Lekkerwater has one family bedroom of around 80 square meters which has a downstairs master bedroom and an upstairs loft area with two single beds. The bedroom shares an open plan shower and vanity area.

All other bedrooms at Lekkerwater are standalone rooms that are not suitable for children under 12 years unless accompanied by one adult.

From time to time Lekkerwater does offer exclusive use options where a family or families can book out the entire lodge for their exclusive use. On these occasions we welcome children of all ages, provided that all the parties in the group are informed and understand that we have an open swimming pool with no fences or nets and furthermore that there are high drop-offs around the lodge that are protected solely by rope balustrades.

WHAT CAN YOU ARRANGE FOR HONEYMOONERS & SPECIAL OCCASIONS?

For those planning your special occasion, we want to make sure that there is a harmonious fit between what you are wanting from your honeymoon at Lekkerwater and what the lodge can realistically deliver. Lekkerwater is a small, remote, off-the-grid lodge tucked away in an isolated part of the De Hoop Nature Reserve. Lekkerwater's focus is on delivering memorable experiences in the beautiful environment and not on the bricks, mortar, baths, gold taps or spas that many larger resort-type hotels and lodges provide. Whilst our accommodation and facilities are perfectly comfortable, sipping cocktails around a swimming pool, rose petals in a bath or a spa day is not our thing. If the weather, winds, and tides are favourable, all or nearly all our guests want to partake in a beach lunch or beach dinner, so we are unable to offer this privately. If however, you are looking for a truly remote and pristine destination and lots of outdoor activities, then Lekkerwater is your spot! We can pack a picnic for you to enjoy privately along the pristine coastline or a cooler box for sundowners over and above our regular activities and surprises. We will do our utmost to make honeymooner's stays as memorable as possible so long as you are happy with the constraints that we live with at Lekkerwater.

WHAT TO PACK?

We do suggest you pack the following items. Reef walking shoes (Crocs or similar that you don't mind getting wet for walking on sharp rocks!); good walking or running shoes for clambering over the hills and into the ravines; binoculars; wide brimmed hats, sunblock; a torch / flashlight; sunglasses; warm windproof jacket; long sleeve shirts, shorts and swimming costume. Please remember a good book and something warm for the cool mornings & evenings. Please don't forget your personal medications as it is a long drive to the nearest pharmacy.

WHAT MEALS DO YOU PROVIDE AND CAN YOU ACCOMMODATE DIETARY CONSTRAINTS?

Lekkerwater's menus are inspired by the cultures & produce of the region as well as the no-fishing and no-foraging rules that govern the De Hoop Reserve and the marine protected area offshore. We strive to ensure that we serve fresh, locally produced and farmed products. Home style hearty meals are cooked with love and passion rather than by "fine dining" precision. Environmental laws required the new Lekkerwater to fit into the existing footprint of FW De Klerk's original house that was built in 1990 and is now defunct. We therefore have a very small developmental area and limited back-of-house and stores area. In tandem, the lodge operates exclusively on solar electricity which restricts the number of modern, energy guzzling appliances. For this reason, we have homely set menus that are down-to-earth that we hope you will find to your liking.

The dinner menu will be displayed in the main area from lunch time onwards. If there is something on the menu that you are not comfortable with, please advise our staff as early as possible so that they can prepare an alternative dish for you. Please do tell us in advance of any allergies and remind the chefs on your arrival of any dietary requirements or food allergies that you may have. Whilst we will do our best to cater to various dietary constraints, please bear in mind our severe logistical constraints. Our supplies are over a half-day round trip drive away, so we are unable to pop over to the local stores to buy and provide for last-minute requests. As we strive to serve fresh food and our suppliers in Bredasdorp do not have a regular stock of fresh fish, we generally do not serve fish, unless specifically required by pescatarians, in which case we will do our best to source what is available.

Please note that we can accommodate Halaal guests with vegetarian food and possibly Halaal meat if available from our suppliers in Bredasdorp, however we do not operate a fully Halaal kitchen.

WHAT DRINKS AND WINE ARE INCLUDED?

A reasonable selection of local wines, bubbly, beers, spirits and cool drinks are included free of charge in our pricing. Our selection of free house wines varies according to what is available locally and usually includes a choice of up to 10 to 12 different red, white and rosé wines. We have sourced most of our wines from the surrounding Overberg Region, a notable farming and wine producing region that stretches from the Elgin Valley in our west to Swellendam and Malgas in the east. We do our best to keep to our wine list, but the selection may change from time to time depending on supplies & suggestions. We hope that you will enjoy exploring what the region has to offer. If you would like to bring your special tequila, single malt, French champagne etc, then please feel free to do so.

WHY ARE LEKKERWATER'S BUILDINGS NOT SPREAD OUT MORE ALONG THE COASTLINE?

The reason for Lekkerwater's small development footprint is because the lodge has to abide by South Africa's extremely strict environmental legislation that governs developments of lodges within protected areas, nature reserves and national parks. The Lekkerwater of today has had to fit into the precise developmental footprint and previously disturbed lands of ex President FW De Klerk's old "Camp David" retreat that was built here in the 1990s – not an inch outside. Fortunately Lekkerwater's proximity to the sea and sound of the crashing waves masks neighbourly noises. We are proud about the minimal negative environmental impact that Lekkerwater has on the De Hoop Reserve.

DOES LEKKERWATER HAVE CELL PHONE RECEPTION AND OFFER Wi-Fi?

Due to Lekkerwater's truly remote location, there is a limited and highly unreliable cell phone signal at Lekkerwater that comes and goes. The lodge is connected to the outside world by satellite and the (free) Wi-Fi is generally reliable but can be erratic. There are however times when the Wi-Fi does not work that could take a few days to rectify due to the remote location of the lodge and the time it takes to get technicians on site to repair. The back-up plan is to walk to the top of the hill behind the lodge where the cell phone reception is stronger.

CAN I BRING MY PETS?

As De Hoop is a gazetted provincial nature reserve, no pets are allowed into the reserve. So unfortunately, we are unable to accept a visit from your furry friends.

WHEN IS THE WHALE SEASON?

De Hoop Reserve is regarded as one of the finest destinations on the planet for land based whale watching. The Bay in front of Lekkerwater hosts large numbers of Southern Right Whales who migrate to the area from Antarctica when that freezes over. The highest recorded number of Southern Right Whales in the De Hoop Bay has been 1100 whales at any one time. The lowest number in whale season has been around three hundred. The first few individual Southern-Right whales start to arrive in mid-May or early June and the last have usually departed by late November. If you specifically want to view the whales, the best time for Southern Right whale viewing is from mid-July to late October, maybe early November. Bryde's whales can be viewed all year and marine life is abundant all year round with regular viewings of super pods of dolphins cavorting in the waves around Lekkerwater.

SPECIAL REQUESTS & PRIVATE FUNCTIONS

Please let us know if you are celebrating a special occasion. It is difficult for us to specify in advance exactly what the lodge will arrange as our options depend on the weather and tides. For this reason, we leave it up to the lodge management team to determine how to best spoil our guests taking the weather, tides and guests into consideration. If the weather and tides are in our favour, guests usually want to enjoy lunch on the beach, so it is impossible for us to offer private dining on the beach. We can however set up a private table apart from the other guests. Our team will do everything possible to make your stay memorable.

IS LEKKERWATER SUITABLE FOR GUESTS WITH MOBILITY ISSUES?

Lekkerwater is perched high up on stabilized coastal dune. All our activities are focused on walking the hills, its gorges and along the coastline. There is a long and steep walk to and from the beach to the lodge. Hence, we are not ideally suited for guests with mobility issues unless they are happy to relax in the main area and enjoy the views with a good book.

CAN WE BRING OUR BICYCLES?

Yes and no! The best mountain biking or eBike cycling is within the interior of the De Hoop Nature Reserve. The last 6km to Lekkerwater is along one single access track which is a steep and technical ride with no option of a circular route. Once you are at the lodge there are no other cycling options unless one heads back into the interior. The beach is very soft sand making MTB cycling, even on fat bikes almost impossible. If you do bring your mountain bike or ebike, we recommend that you arrive early and enjoy a cycle within the interior of the De Hoop Reserve finishing up at our car park 6km away from the lodge. You can then leave your bicycle locked in your vehicle or on your bicycle rack. The Lekkerwater car park is unfenced and whilst we have not had any security issues, we do recommend that the bike and or trailer is locked. Only if you are technically very competent, it is possible to ride to the lodge.

AND FINALLY, WHERE DOES YOUR MONEY GO AND BEE?

One of the policies that the South African Government has implemented successfully over the past nearly three decades has been to create legislation and processes that allows and indeed encourages public sector partnerships with the private sector to help develop and fund the country's national parks and game reserves in order for them become more sustainable and less of a burden on the South African fiscus and taxpayer. Private sector lessors (like Lekkerwater) pay the park authorities for the rights and privilege to operate hospitality facilities within the reserves through a combination of an annual rental payment and a percentage of gross turnover.

Lekkerwater is one such property that is located on public land, operating on a lease from Cape Nature. In terms of the lease, general legislation and Natural Selection practices, Lekkerwater has to pay the following moneys:

- 8% of our gross turnover to Cape Nature to help Cape Nature pay for their costs to manage the reserve in addition to a fixed lease payment.
- 1.5% of gross revenues plus R450 per guest per night to cover the costs of any environmental work that needs to be done
- VAT of 15% to the South African Revenue Service
- Then we need to factor the costs of the travel channel, marketing, reservations and all that.

It does mean that more than 35% of our turnover is paid over before we can start paying our salaries, fixed and your variable costs, commissions etc. 35% does not sound like much, but in an average year it can be up to 100% of nett profit and in a very good year, that still amounts to close on 50% of nett profit.

All the lodges in De Hoop Reserve are BEE accredited through a contracted local community partner agreement which is currently in the process being implemented.