

SA ARCHAEOLOGICALSOCIETY, NORTHERN BRANCH

LONG-WEEKEND PALAEOONTOLOGICAL COACH TOUR TO THE GREAT KAROO'S GRAAFF-REINET AREA AND CRADOCK

Five days: Thursday 6 to Monday 10 October 2022

Accompanied by Prof. Bruce Rubidge, director of the DSI/NRF Centre of Excellence: Palaeosciences, University of the Witwatersrand, and Reinoud Boers

This ArchSoc excursion by coach will visit the Karoo heartland with its extraordinary palaeontological heritage. Prof. Bruce Rubidge, who has relocated to Graaff-Reinet, will provide us first-hand knowledge of the area's world-famous fossil heritage. Visit the spectacular geology of the Valley of Desolation, view the Rubidge Fossil Collection, the Kitching Fossil Exploration Centre and the Owl House in Nieu- Bethesda, see a remarkable fossil site on Doringplaas and spend an evening over wine at the Reinet House Museum listening to the dramatic history of Graaff-Reinet. We will be staying at the Ganora Guestfarm, which has its own fossil and archaeological collection. There will be time to explore Graaff- Reinet. On the return journey, stop for the night at Cradock to visit the Olive Schreiner House and the Great Fish River museums.

THE PROGRAMME

Thursday 6 October

07:00: Depart from Johannesburg (departure point to be confirmed). After a journey of some 10 hours (including stops for refreshments along the way), we arrive at the **Ganora Guestfarm** 8 km outside Nieu-Bethesda at about 17:00. Accommodation in double rooms (*single rooms only subject to availability; singles are encouraged to share*).

20:00: Three-course dinner at Ganora.

Friday 7 October

From 07:30: Breakfast.

09:00: Meet farm owner and palaeontological enthusiast Jan-Peet Steynberg (JP) for a talk and guided tour of the **Ganora museum**, which comprises large fossil and archaeological collections of items discovered on Ganora farm.

10:00: Depart for the adjoining Rubidge family **Wellwood Farm**, where we meet Bruce Rubidge at 10:30. His family has been associated with the Eastern Cape since 1838 and Bruce's grandfather, Sidney, began the epic task of collecting and documenting the Karoo's unique and world-famous 300- million-year-old fossil heritage. **Bruce's scene-setting talk** will cover the ancient geological conditions that gave rise to this extraordinary fossil record. The Karoo is one of the few regions of ancient Gondwanaland that remains intact. Visit the **Rubidge Fossil Collection** at Wellwood.





11:30: Drive to near the summit of **Lootsberg Pass** where Bruce will show us evidence of the Permian-Triassic extinction event, the greatest extinction of all times that wiped out 90 per cent of the world's biota. Then proceed to **Nieu-Bethesda** where there will be time for a snack lunch and refreshments in local coffee shops (*for own account*),

14:00: Visit the **Kitching Fossil Exploration Centre** set up by Bruce over a decade ago. Having grown up in Nieu-Bethesda, James William Kitching (1922–2003) had an amazing ability to find fossils, earning him the epithet 'the man with X-ray eyes'. James was employed at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1945 as a technician in BPI Palaeontology. He undertook extensive fieldwork, and in the Karoo found and described specimens of ancient Karoo fossil fauna and drafted a biostratigraphic scheme for the Karoo. With special permission of the University Senate since he had no undergraduate training, James submitted a PhD on the distribution of Karoo fossils. He was director of BPI Palaeontology prior to his retirement in 1990. Then we will have an opportunity to look for fossils in the pavement of the nearby riverbed under the guidance of Bruce.

16:00: Visit the remarkable work of artist and recluse Helen Martins at the **Owl House**, a peculiar fantasy world created in concrete and glass, often on biblical themes.

17:00: Depart for Graaff-Reinet to visit the lovely **1812 parsonage**, now the well-endowed **Reinet House Museum**, where we arrive at around 18:00 for an **exclusive evening opening**. Members of the **local Heritage Association** and Museum will welcome us with wine and the head of the museum, Anziske Kayster, will give a talk on the history of the town, the parsonage and the Murray family. Our visit ends at about 20:00.

For dinner (*own account*) we walk just down Parsonage Street to **Pioneers Restaurant**, which is known for its Karoo lamb dishes. Return to Ganora Guestfarm by about 10:30.

Saturday 8 October

From 07:30: Breakfast.

09:00: Short guided walk to the Bushman paintings on Ganora farm.

10:00: Depart for **Doringplaas** (*make sure you have your sundowner drinks with you*). Travel towards Graaff-Reinet and turn onto the Murraysburg Road (we meet Bruce at this intersection at 10:30). At Doringplaas we will view a remarkable fossil site hosting very prolific vertebrate and invertebrate fossils, including fossilised fish scales, the fossilised burrows of ancient creatures, a variety of ancient skeletons and frozen-wave patterns.

12:30: After this visit, proceed to Graaff-Reinet for a light lunch at **Our Yard** (*for own account - meal orders will be taken on the coach and phoned through*).

15:00: Leave Our Yard for the **Camdeboo National Park**, the conservation area that virtually surrounds Graaff-Reinet and provides access to the spectacular **Valley of Desolation**. We travel by Quantum 13-seater vehicles. At the valley, Bruce and our guides will tell us about the formation of the valley, its ancient dolerite columns and high cliffs. We end our visit with sundowners while enjoying spectacular views. In Graaff-Reinet we bid farewell to Bruce and return to Ganora.

20:00: Three-course dinner at Ganora.



The valley of desolation

Sunday 9 October

From 07:30: Breakfast. *Luggage to be placed at the coach.*

09:00: Depart for Graaff-Reinet for a few hours at leisure in which to explore this delightful town at your own pace. Options are the **Hester Rupert Art Museum**, a former mission church housing 126 works by 106 South African artists; the **Victorian-Gothic Groote Kerk**, the architecture of which was influenced by Britain's Salisbury Cathedral; the **Old Library** with its permanent exhibition on Pan Africanist Congress founder **Robert Sobukwe**; the **Urquhart House Museum**; the **Military History Museum**; and the **Imibala Gallery**.

13:00: We meet at the **Hello You Restaurant** for a light lunch (*for own account – meal orders will be taken on the coach and phoned through*).

15:00: Depart from Graaff-Reinet and travel to **Cradock** (245 km), arriving there at about 17:30. We overnight at **Die Tuishuise and Victoria Manor**.

19:30: Dinner at the hotel restaurant.

Monday 10 October

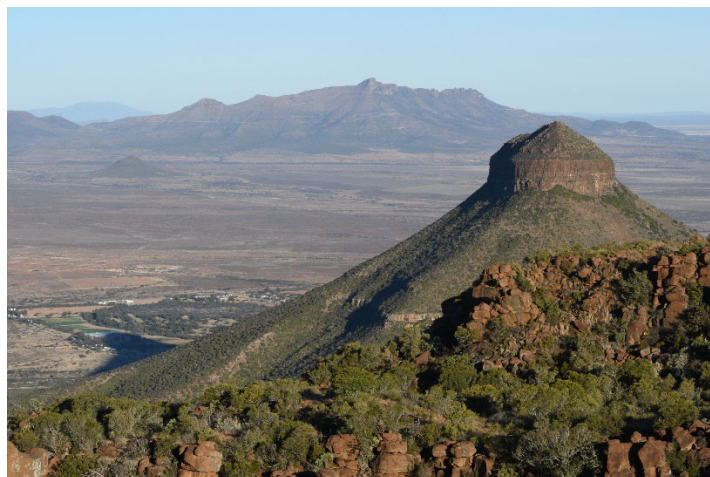
From 07:00: Breakfast. *Luggage to be placed in the hotel foyer.*

08:00: Walk to the **Olive Schreiner House Museum** (a national monument), one of the oldest dwellings in Cradock in which the political activist, feminist and author resided from 1867 to 1870.

09:00: Walk to the nearby **Great Fish River Museum**, which showcases the hard lives led by the pioneer settlers in the area between 1840 and 1900.

10:00: Board the coach and depart for the return journey to Johannesburg. Stops will be made for refreshments along the way.

20:00: Estimated time of arrival in Johannesburg. End of tour.



Spandau

GENERAL DETAILS

Tour price: R6 800 per person sharing

Included in cost: Coach transport on a 36/38-seater coach with two drivers; three nights' accommodation at Ganora Guestfarm and one night at Die Tuishuise and Victoria Manor; three breakfasts and two dinners at Ganora; dinner and breakfast at the hotel in Cradock; talk and guided tours of the museum and rock painting site at Ganora; talk and scene-setting talk by Prof. Bruce Rubidge at Wellwood Farm and visit to the Rubidge fossil Collection; visit to the Doringplaas fossil site; transport and guides to the Valley of Desolation; entrance fees to the Kitching Fossil Centre, the Owl House, the Camdeboo National Park, the Oliver Schreiner House and Great Fish River museums; the Reinet House historical function with wine; the accompaniment of Prof. Bruce Rubidge and an ArchSoc tour leader; safe vehicle parking in Johannesburg.

Not included: Lunches and refreshments on all five days and dinner on 7 October. Sundowner drinks at the Valley of Desolation are for own account. All personal expenses.

Single supplement: Subject to availability and individual quotation depending on accommodation booking.

Minimum group size: The tour price is based on a minimum of 25 paying participants. Should this number not be reached, a price adjustment may be required.

Bookings: Please book with Anne Raeburn via email at anner@mweb.co.za. Normal ArchSoc booking conditions for outings apply. Bookings will be taken in order of receipt. Members who booked on this tour prior its postponement/cancellation owing to Covid will be given preference.

Booking confirmation: Your booking will only be firm once confirmed by email by Anne. The deposit will then be due immediately.

Deposit: A deposit of **R2 000** is required. Please pay this into the **Northern Branch account: SA Archaeological Society, Standard Bank, account number 001 945 920**. Reference: your surname plus 'Karoo Tour'. POP to Anne Raeburn at anner@mweb.co.za. Add R40 bank fees for cash deposits please.

Balance of tour price: The balance of the tour price is payable by not later than **5 September 2022**.

Cancellation by member: The deposit paid will only be refunded if the cancelled seat can be filled.

Indemnity form: An indemnity form will be emailed to you for signature and return closer to the time of departure. This will need to contain your **ID number for SANParks purposes**.

Special diet/allergies: Please advise any special requirements at the time of booking.

Johannesburg departure point: To be advised.