

Rietvlei Nature Reserve

The Rietvlei Nature Reserve is situated south east of Pretoria, in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, between the R21 highway on the western side and R50 road on the north-east.

History

The City Council of Pretoria acquired the farm in 1929, it was not open to the public. However, biological and infrastructural planning of the area continued and game was introduced by Mr. A Weyers in August 1938. This was done by herding the animals from his farm Doornkloof onto the reserve with horses. Subsequently, a nature reserve was proclaimed. The reserve had a small herd of 12 springbuck and other small game species like oribi, grey duiker, steenbok, mountain Reedbuck, etc.

The Rietvlei Dam, built during the Great Depression, was completed in 1934. Manual labour was mainly used for constructing the dam wall and surrounding brickwork. During those difficult years of the depression, labourers were only too grateful to receive a fixed income of four shillings a day. Mule carts were used to move the soil on the site where the dam was built.

The Rietvlei dam is one of a number of dams supplying water to the Pretoria region of South Africa. It supplies around 41 million litres of drinking water daily, about 5.9% of the water requirement of Pretoria.

Attractions

Game Drives: About 60km of well-maintained tar and dirt roads allow for great game viewing. Look out for cheetah, white rhino, leopard, buffalo, blesbok, black wildebeest, red hartebeest, eland, zebra, waterbuck, reedbuck, springbok, mountain reedbuck, steenbok and grey duiker.

Guided night drives – rounded off with a braai under the stars – exposed visitors to the delights of nocturnal species such as the brown hyena, black-backed jackal, ant bear, aardwolf, porcupine, springhare and bush pig.

Hiking: Day walks of 10km (4 hours), game viewing bus tours, horse trails and a 21km (two day) overnight hike from Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon, are also offered. Hiking facilities include two overnights huts with beds, mattresses, hot and cold water, some cooking utensils and firewood. The hiking trails take you past a group of British embankments used during the occupation of Pretoria.

Activities at the dam: Freshwater fishing (catfish, yellowfish, carp and tilapia), which is allowed at the northern and western shores and a variety of non-motorised water sports, which operate from the yacht club located on the north-western shore.

Bird watching: The bird watching is remarkable with two dams on the reserve with bird hides which provide grassland, open water and wetland habitats.

Ecology: Part of the Rietvlei Reserve is populated by endangered Bakenveld grassland, where undulating hills are dotted with clumps of indigenous trees. Exotic and invasive flora such as the Australian silver wattle tree is being systematically removed to restore the vegetation to its natural state.

Operating hours: 05h30 to 19h00 daily

Admission: There are fees payable.

Directions: On the R21 take the Irene / Rietvleidam off-ramp and turn in an easterly direction (towards Rietvleidam). At the first four-way stop turn right towards Olifantsfontein and the St. George's Hotel. Drive for 1.5km crossing the Sesmyspruit. On the left is signboard for the reserve. Turn left and follow the road up the hill to the main gate. Drive past the stone entrance until you get the offices and entrance gate.

