

Tsitsikamma Section of Garden Route National Park - Access for the Mobility Impaired

The Tsitsikamma section of Garden Route National Park is renowned for its breathtaking coastline and enchanting indigenous forest set against dramatic cliffs. From a visitor perspective the park has 2 focal points: The main rest camp is at the mouth of the Storms River and is known as **Storms River Rest Camp**. The other rest camp is some 60 km further west in the beautiful **Nature's Valley** section.

Storms River Rest Camp is reached after a short 10km drive off the N2. After 6km one comes to a boom gate (the entrance into the park) where an attentive guard takes down everyone's details – ascertains if they are an overnighter or a day visitor and issues them with an entrance permit.



On entering the park, one immediately parks one's car and goes into reception. There is a clearly marked, wider dedicated parking space for visitors with disabilities.

Inside reception there is an ablution for persons with mobility impairment.



The rest camp has 3 accommodation options for guests with mobility difficulties. There are four 2-bed **chalets**. These are located in the most easterly part of the camp very close to the camp's restaurant and shop and to the mouth of the river. In the western part of the camp are the **oceanettes** and the oceanette that has been adapted for the mobility impaired is a 4-bed family unit. The 3rd option for visitors with mobility challenges is to **camp or caravan**. One of the camping ablutions has a dedicated ablution for people with mobility difficulties.



The **accessible chalets** look at first fairly cramped and close together, but this masks a spacious interior and a superb proximity to the Indian Ocean. Parking space is shared with one's neighbours but is open and ample. The entranceway into the unit is good. Perhaps a handle on the apex of the door would make it easier for guests in wheelchairs to close the door behind them.



Inside the chalet, the **kitchen** is one of the most accessible found anywhere in SANParks. The hotplates and sink have clearance underneath, as well as an open workbench space. While the top shelf of the cupboards may be out of reach, the lower shelf is well within reach



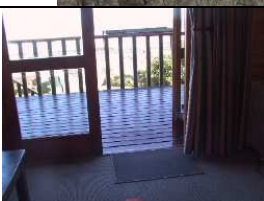
The **bedroom, lounge and dining room** are all in one big open area adjacent the open plan kitchen. The cupboard has a lowered hanging rail which is always a welcome relief for a guest in a wheelchair.



The **ablutions** are compact but adequate for the needs of a person with mobility difficulties. The **toilet** has grab rails in the appropriate position and a flush handle on the open side of the toilet. The **basin** (with a push lever mixer) is close enough to the toilet and offers good clearance underneath. The **roll-in shower** has a seat that is smaller than ideal, but is still sufficient surface area to support a person with a spinal injury. The adjacent grab rail is vertical and needs to be repositioned horizontally to be more useful.



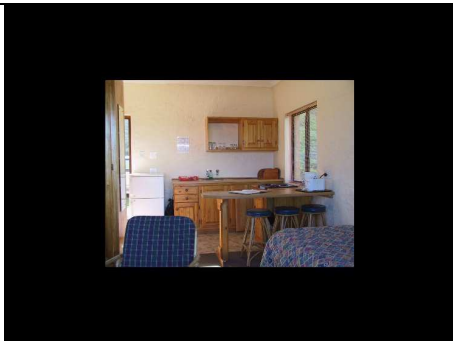
The accessible chalets have small balconies that provide wonderful views of the ocean and the waves crashing against the rocks. There is also a braai facility on the balcony and a table.



The **accessible oceanette** is also located right at the Indian Ocean's edge and sleeps 4 people. It can be entered through the sliding door into the lounge or the wooden front door. Both entrances have slight ridges, but these are low enough to negotiate in a chair.



Inside there is an open plan kitchen, dining area and lounge and 2 bedrooms one with 2 single beds the other with a double bed.



The ablutions are similar in layout to the chalets, although the basin is further (too far) from the toilet and the roll-in shower has 2 supporting grab rails – a horizontal one on the adjacent wall to aid transfer for wheelchair users and a vertical one on the exterior to help frail people pull themselves erect. The seat is also a better size to those used in the chalets.



The camping and caravan site has ablutions for the mobility impaired and a clearly marked pathway along a wooden boardwalk. The facility itself is also clearly marked. Inside the roll-in shower only has a vertical support rail and the basin which has lever push taps is just out of reach for a person sitting on the toilet.





There are a number of different facilities and activities on offer at Storms River Rest Camp. The popular forest walks are inaccessible to wheelchairs because of the difficult terrain (people keen to get into the forest should travel to the wheelchair trail at Nature's Valley in the west of the park, or try the boardwalk to the big tree off the N2. The suspension bridge is also currently off limits as the path to the bridge climbs a small cliff, while the boat cruises can be done with assistance. The enviro centre can be accessed, but is up a steep and long ramp.

The camp's shop and restaurant are accessible with ramps provided at the entrance. Tables inside have sufficient clearance beneath them, while those on the deck are the bench style table and wheelchair users will be restricted to the end of the tables.



The restaurant does have accessible wheelchair ablutions with toilet and basin.



Around the restaurant complex there are a series of boardwalks, platform and stairs. Some of these do facilitate access, while others do not!



The stunning **Nature's Valley** is home to a second rest camp in the Tsitsikamma section.. There are only camping facilities here and ten 2-bed forest huts with communal cooking and ablution facilities. None of the units have any accessibility adaptations which is a pity as the highlight of Nature's Valley is a wheelchair trail that takes one through the forest adjacent the black-water Groot River.

