

## Garden Route National Park visitor numbers spike during SA National Parks Week

The Garden Route National Park (GRNP) has seen visitor figures almost double during the SA National Parks Week campaign, attracting a total of 7,449 visitors. Most visitors were recorded in the Tsitsikamma section of the Park (3,714), Knysna (1,734) and Wilderness (1,506).



View of the Ebb & Flow Rest Camp from the Kingfisher Hiking trail (Image Supplied)

Park Manager Paddy Gordon says: "Knysna has South Africa's single largest complex of indigenous forest fynbos areas. We also manage seascapes and estuaries. SANParks invests millions annually to protect and maintain the area for conservation to the benefit of current and future generations."

The Park had prepared activities to showcase the diverse nature-experiences in the GRNP. The planned activities for each section focused on educational initiatives (seahorse talks, forest walks, estuarine exploration) by People & Conservation Officers.

According to Rey Thakhuli, general manager, Communications at SANParks, the Garden Route had the highest stable increase in the country, realising a 56,8% growth. "The GRNP performed extremely well with the Garden Route recording the highest in the stable realising 56.8% growth, in 2015 they registered 3,51 visitors, in 2016 4,750 and in 2017 an exciting 7,449, while Addo claimed second with 26.4% increase from 6,236 in 2016 and 7,884 in 2017."

### Diverse ways of venturing into nature

The Garden Route remains exciting for both local and international visitors for its diverse ways of venturing into nature - hiking, cycling, ziplining, Segways, water activities (snorkelling, diving, boat cruises, canoeing) and others.

Its wildlife includes diverse mammals such as the blue duiker, honey badger which is listed in the Red Data List as a critically endangered species, the leopard, the caracal, and bush pig. Bushbuck, African clawless otter, the marsh mongoose, the South African large spotted genet, the chacma baboon, Cape grysbok, Cape grey mongoose, Cape porcupine, the velvet monkey, the elusive Knysna elephant and others. Sea

wildlife includes whales and dolphins in Knysna and Tsitsikamma.

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