

Mid-Karoo Route: Situational Analysis (58)

The start of the potential route

This is the turn-off onto the N9 road from the N1 road south of Colesberg. This is a potential alternative route that people could take when travelling from Johannesburg or Bloemfontein to Port Elizabeth, George, Graaff-Reinet, Grahamstown, Cape Town and back.

Wolwefontein Farm

This farm is located half way between the start of the route and Noupoot. Various activities can be arranged on this farm, such as hiking and hunting.

Noupoot

In 1881 the railway line from Port Elizabeth ended on the farm Carlton. With the diversion of the railway line to Colesberg in 1883/84 a station was built on a part of the farm Hartebeeshoek of Mr Barend Kruger. The station was named Naauwpoort after the adjacent farm, allegedly because the pronunciation of Hartebeeshoek was too much of a tongue twister to the English Railway Officials. In 1963 the name was changed to Noupoot.

Attractions:

- Anglican Church in Shaw Street: A British military museum is housed in this Anglo-Boer War church.
- Blockhouse on Hospital Hill
- Garden of Remembrance reflects the town's history.

Rural Monument Erected to celebrate the centenary of the Great Trek

Carlton Heights

This mountain pass is found at an altitude of 1630m between Noupoort and Middelburg and provides spectacular views over the Great Karoo landscape.

Transkaroo Hiking Trail

Near Middelburg with the base house on Wilgerfontein farm

Middelburg town

Middelburg lies in the middle of all the surrounding towns, approximately 100km from each. Surrounded by Graaff-Reinet, Cradock, Steynsburg, Colesberg, Richmond & Hanover, it is no secret as to where the name "Middelburg" came from. It is also halfway between Johannesburg & Cape Town, as well as between Bloemfontein & Port Elizabeth. The R56 route serves as a gateway between the Western Cape & Kwazulu-Natal Provinces. It is the shortest route between these provinces. The R56 route begins at Middelburg and ends at Kokstad. Towns that you'll pass through are Steynsburg, Molteno, Dordrecht, Ugie, Elliot, Maclear and Matatiele.

Attractions:

- **Market Square:** It all started here in 1852. Encircled by Murray, Market, van Reenen & Loop Streets, the Dutch Reformed Church originated here on the Outspan, (Gereformeerde Kerk), as also the Methodist Church and the Town Hall.

The steamroller on Market Square next to the Town Hall was bought in 1938 to build streets and prepare some for tarring. A skilful operator could resuscitate this roller as it is in a perfect condition.

Gereformeerde Kerk: Ds Dirk Postma founded this congregation

at Grootfontein in 1860. In 1979 the building, which houses a Reformed Church Congregation was declared a national monument

Mayor's Garden – Meintjies Street

Burger monument – a graceful obelisk which was erected in 1929 to honour the memory of 19 Burgers who fell during the Anglo Boer War.

Old water pump – Queen Victoria gave this to the town in 1887 when she had reigned for 50 years. The Victoria & Jubilee Streets were named then.

Wall of Remembrance – honours the memory of all who fell during the Anglo-Boer War, the Two World Wars and the Bush War in Namibia.

Middelburg Museum

The corner of Bennie- & Van der Walt Streets, houses the building previously known as the Poor School and contains a fine collection of rifles.

Warden House

Situated at the bottom of the main road, Meintjies Street, which houses the local tourism bureau.

Chair Monument

This monument at Ouberg Koppie, just outside Middelburg on the Richmond road, marks the spot where two commandants, Lotter & Wolfaardt, were executed, during the Anglo Boer War in 1901.

Grootfontein Agricultural Institute

After the Anglo Boer War the farm Grootfontein in Middelburg EC district was bought by the British Department of War in order to establish a peace-keeping force in the area. From 1908 the troops were disbanded. In July 1910 the Union of South Africa took control of the farm after which the Grootfontein School of Agriculture was established in 1911. Many of the corrugated iron-and-wood structures that belonged to the British Military encampment on the farm still remain, as well as the museum complex, which consists of the original farmhouse. PW Vorster Museum: This museum is found in the Grootfontein grounds and is one of the oldest remaining buildings in Middelburg. Arrangements have to be made before visiting the museum for access. The oldest riveted tanks in South Africa can be seen opposite Grootfontein.

- Kestrel roost: Kestrel roosts are found in Middelburg – near the station and graveyard. The bluegum and pine trees receive

these migrants in the summer time.

Rosmead (R 56 to Steynsburg)

The Rosmead station has a rich history, where it is still possible to see the trains that commute between Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg stop at this unchanged station.

Rosmead 'flats' (the area after Rosmead)

Blue Cranes (*Anthropoides paradiseus*) are often seen in this area in groups of 2 to 30. Springbuck (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) and Steenbok (*Raphicercus campestris*) are also seen in this area.

Mount Melsetter, Hillston, Schoombee farms

Various activities can be arranged on these farms, such as hiking and hunting.

Teebus and Koffiebus mountains

These mountains are found after Schoombee and the names were given to these mountains after the early travellers thought the mountains looked like teapots (Teebus) and coffee pots (Koffiebus).

Teebus tunnel outlet

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This is the outlet of the Orange-Fish River Transfer Scheme – where water is pumped from the Gariep Dam to the Fish River – in order to make it possible for farmers to irrigate their lands downstream. Arrangements can be made to visit the tunnel, but the open area can be seen from the road (south of the underground section). The tunnel is 82.8km long and 5.35m in diameter – making it the longest continuous enclosed aqueduct in the southern hemisphere. It is also the second longest water supply tunnel in the world.

Before Steynsburg

The 'Ossewatrek' monument can be seen outside the town. This was erected in 1938.

Steynsburg

Steynsburg, a small and picturesque Karoo town nestled in the mountains and koppies of the far northern East Cape Province, lies on the shortest route from Gauteng to Port Elizabeth, offering travellers from both north and south a convenient chance to recover somewhat before continuing the journey. Situated about three and a half hours' drive from Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein and East London, it provides visitors with a variety of interesting sightseeing options.

Eighty kilometers south of the Gariep Dam, the country's second largest body of fresh water and main supplier of water to the Eastern and Southern Cape, the town is only fifteen minutes' drive from the Orange Fish River Tunnel Project. Ten minutes from town is the farm of Verlatenfontein (Deserted Fountain), the birthplace of Paul Kruger, President of the Zuid-Africhaanshe Republiek during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

Steynsburg Museum: The Steynsburg museum was established in the house where Paul Kruger's grandfather lived.

Erin's Place (N 9 to Graaff-Reinet)

Erin's Place is a very tranquil farm stay situated just outside Middelburg on the N 9 towards Graaff- Reinet.

Lootsberg Pass

This mountain pass is 29 km outside Middelburg on the N 9 at an altitude of over 1800m and provides spectacular panoramic views over the Great Karoo landscape.

New Bethesda

A few kilometres from the bottom of the Lootsberg Pass is the turn off to the world renowned New Bethesda, famous for the Helen Martens Owl House.