

1 Eastern Cape Makkedaat Caves Baviaanskloof

Let's journey back to the Palaeolithic era, a few tens of thousands of years ago, and spend a weekend like a caveman. However, back then cavemen didn't have comfortable beds, fully equipped kitchens, solar lighting, or fridges for their hooch, meat and berries. Makkedaat caves in the beautiful Eastern Cape Baviaanskloof wilderness area do. This is glamping at its best. Each of the six caves is unique. Some are open to the stars, a few have wooden cabin-like facades, while others are quaint and romantic. Our family spent several nights there and loved the way the owners have inventively incorporated comfort and even luxury into

natural caves, hewn by nature over millennia, and inhabited since time immemorial. Our favourite was the largest (also most basic) of all the caves, The Aalwyn Bak. It sleeps up to ten and has an enormous deck overlooking a valley. As its name suggests, tall aloes frame the wide cave mouth. At night, we moved our beds out onto the deck and slept beneath the Milky Way, made bright and sparkling by a complete lack of light pollution. Bring a bear skin toga and thick wooden club, make a fire, and it won't be too hard to imagine defending yourself against sabre-toothed cats and Neanderthals. In the morning, you can cook up some woolly mammoth bacon on the gas stove, have a hot shower, and go for a splendid hike in the foothills of the Baviaanskloof Mountains. – Dale Morris www.makkedaat.co.za

2 Western Cape Sweet Thorn Eco Lodge Oudtshoorn

Hidden away in the mountains of the Klein Karoo, CapeNature's Gamkaberg Nature Reserve has four eco lodges, as well as Ou Kraal (a cluster of four cabins built in the form of old herders' huts) on the top of the mountain. We booked into Sweet Thorn Eco Lodge, that consists of three, safari-style tented rooms erected on wooden platforms. Each camp is exclusive, so we had the place to ourselves. There was such an incredible sense of peace and tranquillity that we felt as if we were the only people in the reserve. The camp was spotless, the paths so neat and tidy that they must have been swept daily. Powered by solar and gas, the communal facilities include a well-equipped kitchen, two lounge areas, eco-friendly waterless toilets and hot-water showers, a braai and grids. There's also a splash pool and a deck where we lounged under a big umbrella. We sat out at dawn and dusk, taking in the views over the magnificent Swartberg range, watching little Karoo Scrub Robins hop about, and listening to more elusive birds. Our days were spent hiking the kloofs of the rugged reserve and 4x4-ing up to the plateau to look for Cape mountain zebra and other game. The weekend passed too quickly, but now that I've discovered this affordable Klein Karoo hideaway, I'll be back. – Fiona McIntosh
021 438 0190, reservation.alert@capenature.co.za, www.capenature.co.za

3 Western Cape AfriCamp at Oakhurst Wilderness

Ever indulged in a wood-fired hot tub under a full moon? A first for us too, so we loaded up the hot tub burner with wood as soon as we dropped our bags at our tent. Two hours later we were enjoying a soothing soak under the stars. This, along with air-conditioned rooms, a gas hob, fridge and oven, wood-burning fireplace, built-in braai and deck, ample Wi-Fi and comfy linen put paid to any idea of slumming it – this is luxury camping. The camp is set on a 640-hectare working dairy farm at the foothills of the Outeniquas, surrounded by fynbos, forest and rolling green pastures. The tents overlook this abundant landscape and guests have access to all the activities on the farm, including forest trails (for walking or mountain biking), horse outrides, swimming in the farm dam and fishing. The farm has a fully stocked farm shop for everything from delicious, ready-to-eat meals and farm fresh milk and eggs to toys, collectables and farm-inspired decor items. Stock up on firewood for a braai (and hot tub), or order braai packs and breakfast or picnic baskets, that you can enjoy on your deck or at any of the picturesque spots on the farm. – Bronwyn Mulrooney

063 170 4222, hello@africamps.com, www.africamps.com

