

**Addo Elephant National Park**  
Access for Guests with Mobility Challenges

**Addo Elephant National Park** in the Eastern Cape is now a mega-park, stretching from the Alexandria Forests in the east, through the Woody Cape Dune Fields, into the succulent valley thicket, and from their into the Zuurberg Mountains and from their west into the Kabouga and the Darlington Lake Areas in the arid Nama-Karoo. There is also the marine section in Nelson Mandela Bay incorporating several coastal islands. In one park one can encounter five of South Africa's seven habitat biomes. Thus for biodiversity Addo has few rivals anywhere on the planet! But it is to **the core original section** that most visitors will travel. This section is in the dense valley thicket that was the refuge that helped prevent the last of the Eastern Cape elephants and buffalo from being exterminated. Here one can encounter the big 5, but it is the elephants that give the park its name and are the biggest draw card of the park and visitors can either self drive through the game area, or book a seat on one of the park game vehicles. Guests in wheelchairs will need to be lifted to and from the vehicle and may find it more desirable to sit in the front with the driver. Addo Main Camp, Matyholweni Camp and the game area is where most of the visitors to the park will spend their time and where 7 adapted accessible units can be found in the 2 rest camps. There is currently no adapted accessible accommodation elsewhere in the park.



**Addo Main Camp- general facilities:** On arrival at Addo Main Camp overnight guests must check in at reception. There is one parking bay with wheelchair signage outside the activities office. The ramped pathways up to the reception, restaurant and shop are all steep, so frailer wheelchair users may require a push. There is a designated wheelchair toilet for those people who need a pit-stop and the buildings are all suitably accessible – although at the shop they may have to open a side entrance.



*Wheelchair parking*



*Ramp up to reception*



*Ramp to Shop*



*Ramp to restaurant*

**Hides:** At the main complex there are 2 game/bird viewing hides. One (the Red Bishop Hide) overlooks a pond and reed bed – best in summer. The other is an underground hide that overlooks a waterhole on the camp's fence-line where elephants and other large game often come to drink. This waterhole is floodlit at night. There is also a viewing point above the underground hide that provides a more elevated view of the waterhole. All three of these viewing sites have wide ramped pathways and are wheelchair accessible, and the underground hide has a cleared space for wheelchair users to get up close to the viewing slot. The camp also has a swimming pool with an access pathway that is accommodating for wheelchair users



*Path to Red Bishop Hide*



*Interior of RB Hide*



*Displays at Viewing Platform*



*Spaces to view waterhole*



**PPC Discovery Trail:** The other facility in Addo Main Camp that was constructed with access for all guests in mind, particularly those with mobility challenges, is the Discovery Trail. This is a boardwalk (made from polywood) through the impenetrable thicket characteristic of the area and it allows trail-goers to be totally surrounded by the sights, sounds and smells of the Addo bush. The trail is not long (only a few hundred metres) and there are a series of information boards that inform visitors all about the Addo Eco-system. Wheelchair bound guests and others with mobility difficulties can either drive to the trail from their accommodation or the main complex, or can get their by road, which is tar. There is parking at the start of the trail, although this is on a loose gravel stone surface, but the distance to the boardwalk is only a couple of metres.



The **Ulwazi Interpretive Centre** was constructed in 2010 and is an excellent facility with conferencing/environmental education facilities and an information display hall informing one about the biological history and ecology of the area and is mostly very accessible. The access ramp is wide, firm, but quite steep.



The centre also has a sound booth to listen to sounds from the park. The entrance gap is too narrow for a wheelchair, but it is a great facility for the visually impaired. The head of *Hapoor* (Nicked Ear), the legendary dominant bull of Addo's early years is also on display and outside there is a facility to demonstrate the sonic hearing ability of elephants. Unfortunately a small fixed step for small children to use the facility makes it difficult to get a wheelchair into the correct position. The centre also has well designed accessible ablutions



**Accessible Accommodation at Main Camp:** There are 5 units out of 66 that have the necessary adaptations to cater for guests in wheelchairs. These include 2 chalets (CH2/4Z) and 3 cottages (CO2Z). The chalets are units that share a common wall an adjacent unit, while the cottages are free standing units. The chalets are on the camp's perimeter and thus great for seeing wildlife from the units' verandas. The cottages are more recently built and are in the centre of the camp. Although the view is still pleasant, these units also have televisions. There are also accessible facilities in the rest camp's camping facilities

 <p><i>Access path to camping ablutions</i></p>	 <p><i>Poor ramp at entrance to accessible ablutions</i></p>	 <p><i>Accessible Camping Ablutions</i></p>	
<p>There are good access pathways to the camping central facilities. The ramp at the door to the unisex ablutions for guests with disabilities does not have a level portion before the door which makes opening the door for a person in a wheelchair more challenging. Inside the toilet and basin layout are fine (the basin could be slightly closer to the toilet), but the shower is missing assistive grab rails – particularly on the adjacent wall to the seat, but otherwise is comfortable to use. There is a step up into the scullery and laundry facility.</p>			
<p><b>Accessible Chalets:</b> There are 2 accessible chalets (28 &amp; 32). The access ramp from the parking area down to the chalet, particularly at #32 is steeper than ideal, particularly if one is transporting luggage. There is also a small ridge at the entrance door which may bother some people. Otherwise there is an outside table on the veranda which has sufficient clearance.</p>			 <p><i>Chalet 32</i></p>
 <p><i>Chalet bed layout</i></p>	 <p><i>Chalet kitchen layout</i></p>	<p>Inside the unit there are 2 single beds pushed together and one double sleeper couch ideal for children. The main beds are comfortable and of a good height for transfer. The lounge, bedroom and kitchen are open plan, with the kitchen behind a counter – not completely ideal for wheelchair guests, but not too bad.</p>	
<p>The chalets' ablutions are compact, but offer a choice between a bath and a roll-in shower. The basin is within reach of a person on the toilet which is good. The roll-in shower is a 3 wall layout with the sliding detachable shower on the opposite wall to the fold-down seat which may be difficult for some people to reach when out of their wheelchairs and on the seat.</p>		 <p><i>Chalet toilet, basin &amp; bath</i></p>	 <p><i>Chalet roll-in-shower</i></p>
 <p><i>Cottage 46 access path</i></p>	<p><b>Accessible Cottages:</b> The 3 accessible cottages (43, 46 and 51) are all modern comfortable units set in the indigenous bush. All have good access into the unit, with sufficient parking space on flat ground with a gravel surface, although at 43 the erosion after heavy rain creates an uneven surface getting to the concrete pathway. The outside braai (barbecue) facility is also concreted and accessible from all sides. The bedroom, kitchen, dining room and lounge are open plan and comfortable to negotiate, although there is no clearance below the sink or hotplates. The beds can be split on request. Each unit has a small outside veranda with easy access. For some the TV with limited DSTV will be an unnecessary luxury, but others may appreciate it.</p>		
 <p><i>Cottage braai area</i></p>	 <p><i>Cottage kitchen</i></p>	 <p><i>Cottage bedroom</i></p>	 <p><i>Cottage veranda</i></p>

The **ablutions** of the 3 cottages have new fold-down seats in the roll-in showers that replaced original ones that were too small. This is a great improvement. The seat however is in the middle of the wall the sliding detachable shower is on and the opposite wall that the mixer is on which is a most unusual design and not really ideal. The units' basins are well designed though and the pull down mirror is useful, but the basin is out of reach of someone using the toilet. The adjacent grab rail for the toilet is mounted too high on the side wall making it redundant to use



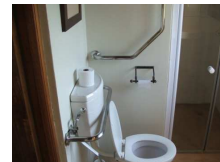
*Roll-in-shower*



*Mixer on opposite wall*



*Basin access with adjustable mirror*



*Toilet with poor adjacent grab rail*

**Matyholweni Camp:** Matyholweni Camp is Addo's second camp and is located in a quiet valley near the coastal town of Colchester at the Sundays River Mouth, 3km off the N2 highway. 14 accommodation units merge into the surrounding bush. In fact the name Matyholweni, means "in the bush" in Xhosa. The camp is easily accessible and provides an alternate gateway into the Park. Amenities such as shops, restaurants and a fuel station are available in the nearby town.



*Matyholweni's cottages melt into the bush*

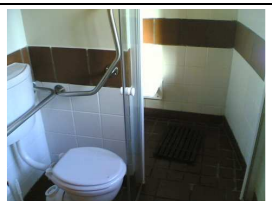
Two of the cottages are adapted for guests with mobility challenges. These **accessible cottages** have 2 single beds pushed together to form one (they can be separated into 2 singles on request)



The **units' ablutions** are differently laid out to the ones in Main Camp. The grab rail on the side wall of the toilet is better positioned, but because it is a cranked rail the diagonal portion should be horizontal to be of more use for transferring to and from a wheelchair. Once more the basin is out of reach for a person using the toilet, but otherwise is accessible and has the same adjustable shaving/make-up mirror. The roll-in shower uses a good sized fold-down seat which will provide stability for those using it – it is also the correct distance from the adjacent wall and the mixer tap is on the correct too on the same wall as the sliding, detachable shower on the height adjustable sliding pole. All that is missing is a straight grab rail below the mixer to be used for transferring on and off the seat and for support.



*Roll-in-shower layout*



*Toilet layout*



*Basin and mirror layout*



*Picnic Site ablution block*



*Pathway to picnic tables*

In the **Game Viewing Area** the main facility is the network of roads for viewing wildlife. There is however a picnic site and here accessible facilities – ramps and accessible toilet has been provided. The other place one can disembark is at Domkrag Dam's lookout parking area.