

Forest Hall

Physical address: The Craggs

GPS Co-ordinates: 33 59 22 30" S / 23 29 36 79" E

Location: The Craggs

Sleeps: 8 + 3 children in the Manor House (included in the rental) (one room downstairs can be converted which would mean that the Manor House sleeps 10 + 3 children (this must be requested). The East Cottages which are complimentary sleep an additional 8 - Children welcome

THE MANOR HOUSE

Sleeps 8 adults and 3 x children upstairs and 2 x adults' downstairs

First Floor

- A 200 m² Master Bedroom with an open-plan bathroom and a large dressing room + a private studio loft that serves as a separate children's room (Sleeps 3 and has own en-suite bathroom)
- Three en-suite double bedrooms
- Linen room

Ground Floor

- Fully equipped kitchen, with a double Godin professional cooker, 3 refrigerators, a 9 m² double-door cold room & wall-mounted freezer
- Dining room, with a yellow wood table that can sit up to 25 people
- An extensive living and entertainment area (incl. a large atrium, a morning room and a sun room)
- Study with computer, printer & internet connection
- Sun lounge adjacent to the sun room that can also be converted in an extra en-suite double bedroom if needed with en-suite bathroom.
- Sun deck: A large outdoor deck area with 2 large tables, and a second sitting area with a swing bench overlooking the Indian ocean. Perfect for entertaining or simply relaxing under the African sun. A linen shade cloth and nearby trees over the lawns provide cover

Set in the grounds close to the Manor House and more rustic in nature

East Cottages: Four adjoined rooms each with their own with en-suite bathrooms

Facilities in the grounds of the 220 ha Estate include:

Pool, Jacuzzi & Pool House: The 25 metre Infinity Pool is heated with solar panels and is kept sparkling with an environmentally friendly salt-water cleaning system that does not require the use of chlorine. A Jacuzzi adjacent to the pool can accommodate up to 16 people: where children can play safely while parents sunbath or relax on the pool deck. The pool house is fully equipped with professional style kitchen, wood fired pizza oven, fireplace and barbecue, and a table for 12. Ideal for long summer lunches and suppers.

Gym: A fully equipped gym offers keeping in shape in-between all the eating, drinking, relaxing and having fun.

Business Centre: A business centre is located in one of the guest cottages opposite the main house and is equipped with computers, fax and internet connection (including wireless).

Internet: Broadband internet access is available across the property although due to the fact that the estate is remote it is not always reliable.

The house is situated on the edge of 10 hectares of smooth lawn and paddocks, perfect for walking, exercising and horse riding. A number of deck areas are perfect for outdoor pastimes, breakfasts, lunches and romantic dinners looking toward the Indian Ocean:

The Sun Deck: the main deck (with a linen shelter) overlooking the Indian Ocean.

The Orb Deck: overlooking the Outeniqua Mountains - perfect for sundowners.

The Pool Deck: ideal for sunbathing.

Mickey's Deck: on the way down to the private beach - the perfect spot for whale watching.

The Caravan Camp: overlooking the Indian Ocean - unbeatable for romantic picnics.

Forest Hall as a Retreat

Forest Hall Estate is situated on a confluence of magnetic Earth energy lines - or 'ley' lines as they sometimes known. This gives the place a very powerful healing energy. Combined with the beautiful, natural surroundings and the location - far from the noise of cars on the road and above cliffs overlooking the ocean - this makes Forest Hall particularly suitable as a Retreat. The afro-montane forest that surrounds the property, and which borders the garden only metres from the house on the eastern side, is another source of palpable and powerful natural energy - hard to define, but a recognisable force that any local living here will attest to: an energy that comes from the trees and gives this part of the world a unique atmosphere.

Forest Hall has been described in accounts of its history as having been a very happy home. It has also been said that there is something magical about the place. Today, the cliff-top location, the forest, the sea and gardens, the splendour and magnificence of the environment (more preserved here than anywhere else in the Garden Route) - these are complemented by so many more features: the character of the house such as the genuine wooden floors, doors and ceiling beams, the luxurious furnishings and the combination of Victorian and modern appointments, the pool and facilities and the attentive staff - not to mention the proximity of passing whales and dolphins which can be viewed from the Manor House. All of these factors combine to make Forest Hall perfectly suited for those

seeking healing - whether from post-traumatic (emotional) or post-operative stress (physical and often also emotional) or just from the effects of modern living. Forest Hall offers a complete getaway that will help individuals to re-connect with themselves and nature; to rebalance mind, body and spirit, and to leave behind the distractions and stressors that inhibit personal growth and fulfillment.

In order to facilitate any such pursuit, or purely in the interests of maximising the relaxation factor of your holiday, we can arrange massage and Spa therapists, yoga & meditation instructors, and astrologers. We will be happy to assist in procuring the services of whatever professionals you have in mind. The Garden Route is known to have many such practitioners, drawn to live in this part of the world by the same energies and peace that makes a stay here so special.

The 220ha Forest Hall Estate lies in the heart of The Craggs - a spectacular part of the Garden Route situated between the town of Plettenberg Bay and the Stormsriver bridge on the eastern border of the Western Cape and nestled between the foothills of the Outeniqua mountain range and the Indian Ocean. Home to the world-renowned Kurland Pavilion & Polo Estate, just a couple kilometres from Forest Hall 'as the crow flies' and the Bramon Bubbly Estate, between Forest Hall and Kurland, The Craggs has a uniquely rural character which blends fynbos, afro-montane forest, farmland, vines, wilderness and fine living.

The Estate also forms the western border of the Tsitsikamma Forest, and runs along the coastline, predominantly at elevation, to the eastern border of Keurbooms - 2km of private coastline.

Some of the most spectacular beaches in the world are within a 10-minute drive, and the town of Plettenberg Bay, with all its fabulous shops and restaurants, is barely 20 minutes by car.

Plettenberg Bay has a small airport with weekly flight - CemAir. Helicopters can be landed directly on the Estate. George airport is a two-hour drive past Plettenberg Bay, and the airport at Port Elizabeth is only an hour and half in the other direction.

Activities on the Estate:

Forest Hall Estate offers a number of educational and leisure opportunities for both children and adults.

For both adults and children: Learning in our laboratory about the re-forestation and alien clearing program which has been run by Landmark Foundation scientist Albert Ackhurst for some years. An indigenous nursery on the Estate is a wonderful opportunity for guests to get involved in or just appreciate the local flora and the efforts currently underway in the Garden Route to clear alien vegetation and re-establish the unique Afro-montane ecosystem that is found nowhere else in the world apart from the Amatole / Hogsback region in Kwazulu-Natal - where it was the inspiration for J.R.R. Tolkien's famous book The Lord of The Rings.

Walks into the pristine Tsitsikamma forest right on the property to learn about this ancient and unique African ecosystem - the home of the prized Yellow-wood. The Tsitsikamma is a true 'fairy forest' and the name is an ancient Khoi word meaning 'place of many waters' due to the abundance of waterfalls to be found in the greater Tsitsikamma area.

Barbecue (or 'braai')! There are several perfect spots - each equipped with deck, table and barbecue, near the beach, in the shade of the trees, where the children can play safely, bathe and wait for the grill to be ready.

Sleep-over at the grotto. A night in the very large natural grotto overlooking the sea is a unique experience, and a great outdoors experience to share with your family.

Activities in the Area:

Forest Hall is situated in the heart of 'the Craggs' - part of the greater Plettenberg Bay (or Bitou) area, 20 mins drive west to the main town of Plett, and 40 mins drive to Storms River and Bloukrans - the site of the highest commercial bungy jump in the world. A wide range of activities and attractions beckon - from the 'wild side': bungy, bridge walks and canopy swings, black-water tubing, surfing, diving (there are a number of options available in the area) and sky-diving - to the 'mild side': animal sanctuaries such as Tenikwa, Monkeyland and Birds of Eden, game viewing at the Plett Game Reserve, boat-based whale -watching, hiking, miles and miles of beaches, restaurants & shopping.

Hiking

Forest Hall is situated right on the Western edge of the beautiful forest of the Tsitsikamma National Park - near the finishing point of the world-renowned **Otter Trail** - 42 kms of pristine beaches, cliffs and coastal forest from Storms River Mouth to Natures Valley. Although it is necessary to book a place on the Otter Trail well in advance (the trail takes 4 days to complete), a number of shorter trails and hikes are available in the area. Within the property boundaries of Forest Hall itself, exceptional hiking trails take you through spectacular indigenous forest down to the private beaches at the foot of the cliffs. From the house you can hike east through the forest to Salt River and from there either through more forest or along the rocky shore-line for a short distance to the popular Nature's Valley beach and lagoon, or west along the coastline all the way to Keurbooms. For the brave at heart there is the Forest Hall Coastal Cave walk, which involves swimming through a cave - only possible at low tide. Please note that these hikes are challenging! Since most routes involve steep gradients, dense forest and rugged coastal sections, all hikes are supervised by the manager of the property. However, gentler, more family-oriented forest and coastal walks are only a short distance away at Natures Valley, or through forests on other parts of the Estate.

Swimming

Forest Hall has its own private beaches, with rock pools that are ideal for children to swim in and play safely. The beaches can be reached via several paths down through the forest - these are very steep and challenging, and then there is the climb back up! For those with small children or who are feeling less like a true adventure through the ancient lichen-covered and moss-hung trees, the beaches can be reached on a 4x4 drive from the front garden area of the Manor house. The difficult paths through the forest and the inaccessibility of the beaches from anywhere but Forest Hall Estate itself means privacy...and unspoiled coastline. The 25 metre 'Infinity Pool' near the Manor House is heated with solar panels and is kept sparkling with an environmentally friendly salt-water cleaning system that does not require the use of chlorine. A Jacuzzi adjacent to the pool can accommodate up to 16 people.

Mountain Biking

Forest Hall Estate lends itself to mountain-biking - with 220 ha of open ground and forest, there is no shortage of trails and paths. Trails range from easy to highly challenging. For those who wish to venture farther afield, trails can be found in the Tsitsikamma, Harkerville and Knysna Forests. The surrounding Craggs area and the road and forests of Natures Valley are also a cyclist's paradise.

Bird Watching

Forest Hall offers amazing opportunities for bird-watching! The Tsitsikamma forest, which ends right in the front garden, is home to the spectacular Knysna Loerie and the rare endemic Narina Trogon, among many others. Click on the following local link and let your cursor rest on the pictures of the birds for information on the four primary species that can be seen flitting through the forest canopy - and through the trees around you as you enjoy the afternoon on the deck or relaxing in the swing chair:

Whale-Watching

The cliffs and beaches of Forest Hall Estate offer incredible whale-watching opportunities. Southern Right whales (so named because they were once the 'right' whales to hunt) move through the area off the Estate's coastline during the winter months, from late April to early October. They come to the Bay to breed and calve and can be seen singly or in groups of several individuals close to shore. Walk down the cliff with a pair of binoculars and you may get to enjoy the experience of watching a whale calve. Brydes whales are present throughout the year, and Humpbacks move through in considerable numbers during the summer months - close in shore. Humpbacks are of course famous for their 'breaching' behaviour - throwing their enormous bulk out of the water in apparent exuberance. It is an incredible sight to see, and Forest Hall offers one of the finest vantage points along the Garden Route coast. Sightings of these majestic creatures are virtually a daily occurrence.

For a truly close encounter, two permitted boat-based whale-watching companies operate from Main Beach at Plettenberg Bay. Year-round trips promise dolphin sightings, winter trips offer close encounters with Southern Rights, and summer trips the very real chance of getting splashed by a breaching Humpback!

Line Fishing

Forest Hall's own beach is known as a great spot for line fishing. With the right tide and weather, you can settle in for the day to catch your own supper in a spectacular and private setting - nothing and no-one around you but soaring cliffs, lush coastal forest and the open ocean. Your only companions might be dolphins, or Humpbacks and Southern Right whales at certain times of the year.

At Forest Hall, we are committed to using environmentally friendly technologies to run the Estate's systems as far as possible:

1. **Solar Panel System:** The Pool has been fitted with the latest available technology in solar water heating. We have installed 18 x Genersys 1000-10 solar collector panels with an average output of 1200kwh per panel.

The system is a world leader in flat plate sun collectors, and the panels are certified to comply with BS EN12975 standards in the USA and Canada.

2. **Biolytix System:** The sewage on the farm is controlled and managed by a fully automatic Biolytix sewage system - the system complies with local municipal standards and the final stage treatment of the effluent water is cycled every 30 minutes through natural reed beds and manmade wetland systems - the effluent water is also cycled constantly through water energizing flow form systems to maximize aeration and water purification.

Forest Hall is also actively involved in initiatives aimed at providing support to the local Craggs community of Kurland Village. It is currently involved in the setting up of a non-profit initiative aimed at promoting local initiatives. This is being done through the creation of a cultural village where local people will be able to showcase and sell their arts and crafts to tourists. The initiative also involves the local people in the clearing of alien vegetation and re-forestation, and incorporates plans for the creation of the 'Craggs Animal Sanctuary' - a game park and rehabilitation centre for indigenous animals

A BRIEF HISTORY OF FOREST HALL

Forest Hall Manor was built in 1862 by an English gentleman and colonist, William Henry Newdigate - the third son of Francis and Lady Barbara Newdigate of Astley Castle in Warwickshire, England. History tells us that he built the stately home for his beautiful bride, Caroline Duthie - the grand-daughter of George Rex of Knysna. With next to nothing available in the way of infrastructure and skills in the then still untamed and barely colonized part of Africa that is now known as The Garden Route, Newdigate imported masons and carpenters from England to build his 'gift'. The floors, door and window frames, ceiling supports, and the grand central staircase were hewn from the ancient hardwoods of the surrounding forest.

The Newdigates played host to many of the colonial pioneers of the day (including Bishop Grey and Thomas Bain), and the Estate, with its rolling lawns, croquet games, music and dances, finest china and family silver, was an 'island of gentility' in the middle of the dense Tsitsikamma - home to leopards, baboons and herds of elephant, bushbuck and water buffalo. While the women - corseted and with parasols to keep off the African sun - 'took their tea' and the children chased butterflies, the men formed hunting parties and went on fishing expeditions. Forest Hall was an 'English Gentleman's Estate', a haven of civilization and - so it is told - great joy, but five years after it was built, an unforeseen and dramatic page was added to its history.

The Great Fire of 1869 has gone down in the annals of local history as possibly the most devastating and terrifying event of the times. It swept through the fynbos and forest between the sea and the mountains with an extraordinary ferocity, burning almost the entire area from what is now Humansdorp (near Port Elizabeth) all the way through to Mossel Bay. The loss of habitat and life was absolute. As the Newdigate family, their servants, and others who had fled there from the surrounding communities huddled in the house, under a black sky choked with ash, their desperate prayers seemed answered. For hundreds of miles around nothing had been spared, but a sudden change in wind direction and a dense fog that rolled up the cliffs from the sea turned the flames; alone in the area, Forest Hall, and the fortunate people cowering inside, survived to begin anew.

That glorious and stately chapter of Forest Hall's past sadly came to a close in the early 1930's. Though the house was still in the Newdigate family, it was left vacant after William and Caroline's three spinster daughters moved to be closer to the town of Plettenberg Bay in their later years. Other family had long before moved on or passed away. The house fell into a long slow decay and over the years the home that was once so vital and alive became an empty shell; like all old homes to suffer such a fate, it became a 'ghost house', the source of chilling stories and legends amongst locals.

The intervening years have seen the house slowly and painstakingly restored, first by tenants who lived there for many years, then by Hilary Peter, the great grand-daughter of William and Caroline

Newdigate (after the tenants left and the house fell into disrepair a second time), and in the more recent past by new owners. The house and the grounds today are somewhat more than just reminiscent of its aristocratic origin, but instead of ghosts, there is new life and a deep sense of permanence. Forest Hall is fitted with the finest in modern amenities, but the essential character of this beautiful monument to South African history has not changed - even as everything around it does.

In recognition of this value and its now irreplaceable structure, Forest Hall was declared a National Monument by the South African Heritage authority in 1992.

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