

# Karoo increasingly capturing the hearts of travellers, property investors

With its vast open spaces and a myriad of characterful towns, the Karoo is becoming a compelling and exciting tourism destination for travellers. According to Wayne Rubidge, Pam Golding Properties area principal in the Karoo, the reasons for this are apparent as the Karoo has so many different options to offer - not only for tourists but also those who want a relaxing getaway property of their own, which can also provide them with a regular income stream.



Image Supplied: Prince Albert guesthouse

"In the light of economic constraints, domestic tourism has flourished, with cost-conscious South Africans eager to visit easily accessible destinations without even having to cross the borders or travel overseas. This has made the acquisition of a tourism or accommodation establishment very attractive to those wanting to relocate permanently to a country location.

"And, with the expansion of wireless ADSL service providers, many towns now have faster internet connections which are increasingly important and of benefit to businesses or those working remotely."

## All roads lead to the Karoo

Rubidge says considering the Karoo encompasses no less than four provinces which include the Free State and all three Cape Provinces, its central location ensures that all road travellers going from north to south must pass through it - with a high probability that due to the distances involved they will sleep over in one of the Karoo's numerous towns.

The region is well serviced by five national roads and is accessed from all the major centres. The N1 highway dissects the Karoo and links with other national routes that also cross the Karoo from the major centres and airports such as George on the Garden Route, Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape and Cape Town in the Western Cape. Besides the N1, other popular access routes are the N10 for visitors for the Karoo Midlands via Cradock, the N6 for the Eastern Karoo which passes Queenstown, the N9 to George via Graaff-Reinet and the N12 from Kimberley to Beaufort West.



Image supplied: Graaff-Reinet four-star guesthouse on the market

Due to this location and the perennial interest in exploring the Karoo, accommodation establishments have proved over time to be a popular investment. Many of the leading destinations include towns like Prince Albert, Graaff-Reinet and Cradock and many others which all have their own unique attractions, including three National Parks.

## Specialty destinations

Speciality destinations like beautiful villages such as Rhodes, Nieu Bethesda, and Loxton are as popular as the larger towns. The diversity of attractions and activities that the Karoo has to offer is also an important component for visitors and includes the adventure destinations found along the Orange River and two of South Africa's largest dams - the Gariep, and the Vanderkloof dam.

Says Rubidge: "We find that many visitors either come to the Karoo having done their property searches via the internet and go to a specific town with the intention of buying a property as an investment or holiday house or alternatively, the growing trend is to seek a property in order to relocate to the country – and here the Karoo is an ongoing favourite.

"Alternatively, visitors travelling to the Karoo for a holiday or an event fall in love with an area or a town and decide to investigate property investment opportunities. Normally these buyers will not buy immediately but will start with an internet search and then visit the region again to inspect various properties. This process can take up to six months from the first visit and sometimes even longer or during the next holiday season.



Image Supplied: Cradock guesthouse

## All types

“Due to the wide range of towns in the Karoo people display diverse interests in properties of all types, but the most popular are the properties with historic value built in the classic Karoo style and either a larger Victorian style or the simple lock up and go Karoo flat-roof cottages. In the instance of relocation for lifestyle purposes, a guest house or a business component is often a request. Price varies substantially, depending on mostly the size of the town and the facilities available such as schools.

“Each town has its own unique culture and offerings for visitors or travellers who converge on or travel through the region from all the quarters of South Africa. Buyers at the top end of the market are mostly successful businessmen or families who come from the bigger metropolises, where a lifestyle change is high on the list of reasons for investing. They also find that a guest house or hospitality business is a great way to stay involved and meet with people from all walks of life who visit the Karoo.”

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