

Plettenberg Bay is a seaside town only 20 miles from Knysna. Frequented by tourists from other parts of South Africa and from overseas, especially in summer, it has stunning beaches and a beautiful nature reserve on the Robberg Peninsula.



Further on, towards Port Elizabeth, there is the rugged Tzitsikamma, a beautiful coastal national park where one can stay in Parks Board chalets and a few miles after, on the main road, is the spectacular single arch bridge spanning the gorge at Storms River. It was completed in 1956 and at the time was considered a feat of civil engineering; in fact, it became a regular place to stop for refreshments and peer over the edge at the gorge below (or to bungee jump, if you are mad enough to do that sort of thing).



After Storms River one passes turnoffs to a number of well-known coastal holiday resorts such as Jefferies Bay (world famous for its surfing) and St Francis. From there it is about an hour's drive to Port Elizabeth, which was given its name by the then acting Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Rufane Donkin, in honour of his wife.

The city was founded in 1820 when a group of 4,000 British settlers landed there. It grew rapidly in the first half of the twentieth century and because of its excellent port facilities it was the home of the wool trade and it attracted a number of important industries such as motor cars (including components and tyres). It also has magnificent beaches and is a popular tourist destination.



It is also a convenient stopover for those who want a safari experience as there are some great, malaria-free game reserves just over an hour's drive inland. Perhaps the best known are Addo Elephant Park, one of South Africa's national parks, and Shamwari, a luxury private reserve.



Port Elizabeth to Ermelo is a good nine hour drive and en route one passes through the eastern Karroo, a semi-arid area famous for its sheep farming, and skirts the Lesotho border with magnificent views of the Maluti mountains.



Ermelo itself is a small town on the main road from Johannesburg to Swaziland. It started out as a stopover for ox wagons transporting goods around the area and then became a hub for the local farming community. Subsequently it became an important coal mining town.



Next stop Vryburg!

PS One of the great landmarks in Port Elizabeth is the Horse Memorial, erected in 1905 to commemorate the +/- 300,000 horses that suffered and died during the second Boer War. The inscription reads:

THE GREATNESS OF A NATION
CONSISTS NOT SO MUCH IN THE NUMBER OF ITS PEOPLE
OR THE EXTENT OF ITS TERRITORY
AS IN THE EXTENT AND JUSTICE OF ITS COMPASSION

