



**cradle of human culture**

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#cradleofhumanculture



A journey through the Cradle of Human Culture traces the origins and development of human culture over the past 160 000 years and, in the process, it also uncovers what it means to be human.

From engraved ostrich eggshells and bone tools to shell beads and the first evidence of drawing, visitors will discover some of humanity's earliest use of symbols, art and technological innovation.

While the Cradle of Humankind in Gauteng holds some of the earliest evidence of the human journey, starting from about 3.5 million years ago, the Cradle of Human Culture holds evidence of how our ancestors started to manifest abstract thought, to use fire to improve their tool-making skills and to systematically exploit marine resources for their nutrition. These sites reveal how we, as Homo sapiens, started to innovate socially, behaviourally and culturally. By following the footsteps of our early predecessors, visitors will discover how we became what we are today.

The Cradle of Human Culture includes several archaeological and palaeontological sites in the Western Cape. The three major ones are Diepkloof Rock Shelter in the Cape West Coast (Weskus), Blombos Cave and Pinnacle Point on the Southern Cape Coast. However, a trip to the Cradle of Human Culture includes more than these three sites and the development and expression of human culture can be traced across all sites.

Choose a journey, and start your road trip.



©Zeitz MOCAA



## Cape Town

Cape Town is a fusion of diversity. It is a city overflowing with attractions for visitors interested in history, art, culture and a beautiful environment.

Table Mountain is one of the most iconic attractions in Cape Town. For modern African art at its finest, visit Zeitz MOCAA and the Norval Foundation. Visitors can enjoy the work of local artists at the Maboneng Township Arts Experience and view collections ranging from fossils to rock art at the Iziko South African Museum, where you can explore the exhibition “Mother Africa Welcome Home”.

This is a compilation of multimedia, artefacts and objects offering a deep insight into the lives of our early ancestors. See the results of some of the archaeological research conducted along the Southern Cape’s coastline over the past 25 years, including replicas of the archaeological artefacts discovered at Blombos Cave

## !Khwa ttu, Yzerfontein

!Khwa ttu is a San Heritage Centre which is located near Yzerfontein. At !Khwa ttu San culture ancient and recent history are presented through a series of exhibitions, videos and presentations. !Khwa ttu provides a platform for contemporary San to share and explore their history and culture with both San community members and local and international visitors. The historical exhibitions highlight the continuity of San history and its links to human origins, issues of colonial genocide and discrimination against them. The community section deals with San resilience and recent development initiatives of the various San communities in southern Africa. In the ‘Way of the San’ building a day in the ‘traditional’ life of the Kalahari San is illustrated. The exhibitions

and guided experiences engage body and senses as much as the mind and demonstrate traditional lifestyles, culture and heritage, and ancient survival skills of the San. Visitors can also take a drive in an open vehicle past zebra, springbok and other wildlife, through unspoilt fynbos, to a replica San village.

For more information, please visit [www.khwattu.org](http://www.khwattu.org)

## West Coast Fossil Park, Langebaan

The West Coast Fossil Park has an exceptional interpretation centre displaying well-preserved fossil remains of the animals that inhabited the area about 5-million years ago.

The deeply buried fossil bones of now extinct animals such as saber-toothed cats, short-necked giraffes (sivatheres), hunting hyenas and African bears were uncovered in the 1950s during phosphate mining and they are now visible at the dig site in a display unique to South Africa.

This is an unforgettable visit, which will leave no visitor dissatisfied. A newly-built state-of-the-art interpretation centre, housed in an impressive eco-friendly building, will take visitors on a journey illustrating how the landscape in the area changed over the last 5-million years, what life was like when the sivatheres were alive and which other now- extinct animals roamed the land.

For more information, please visit: [www.fossilpark.org.za](http://www.fossilpark.org.za)



West Coast Fossil Park - credit Uno Pereira

## Elands Bay Cave, Elands Bay

Breathtaking San and Khoe rock art has been found in the Elands Bay Cave in the hills above the Elands Bay harbour, about 5km from the centre of the village. This site was first occupied during the Middle Stone Age, dating back more than 80 000 years, and intermittently during the Later Stone Age until possibly 500 years ago. Rock paintings include large images of eland, regarded by the San as spiritual creatures, as well as smaller antelope and other animals. Most striking are the many small handprints on the cave walls, some of which are believed to be those of children and young teenagers.

The site is open to the public free of charge, but visitors are requested to stay on the demarcated path and not touch the rock art since this may cause irreversible damage to the paintings.

## Diepkloof Rock Shelter, Piketberg

Diepkloof Rock Shelter takes its name from the nearby Diepkloof stream. It is situated between Elands Bay and Redelinghuys and overlooks the Verlorenvlei wetland.

The exceptional collection of over 400 intentionally engraved ostrich eggshell, dated to around 60 000 years ago, are amongst the earliest known examples of storage and transport vessels anywhere in the world. These engraved fragments of ostrich eggshells showcase early development of a graphic tradition, the ability of our ancestors to conceptualise patterns and forms that do not exist in nature and the complex use of symbols to mediate social interactions.

The early appearance of more refined stone tools between 100 000 and 74 000 years ago provide evidence of abstract thinking, technological innovation and the ability to plan and strategize. Excavated for over 40 years, this site contains one of the most complete and continuous Middle Stone Age archaeological sequences in Southern Africa. This extremely well preserved record has allowed scientists to reconstruct in detail the lives of our ancestors, the environment in which they thrived, and their adaptation over the course of the millennia to an evolving environment.

In addition to the Middle and Later Stone Age deposits, the site also contains rock art dating back to San hunter-gatherers, Khoe pastoralists and the colonial period. The sequence of these rock paintings, at times overlapping, shows the long period during which the cave was occupied and used.

Diepkloof Rock Shelter was declared a Provincial Heritage Site in 2015 and it is currently on the tentative serial nomination list of UNESCO World Heritage sites. It is expected to be declared a World Heritage Site within the next few years.

## Riel dancing and living culture

Experience an authentic riel dance, a cultural expression of courtship rituals and joyous dance moves practiced by descendants of San and Khoe people. In recent years this dance form has enjoyed a revival among young and old. Die Nuwe Graskoue Trappers - a riel dance group from the small Cederberg settlement of Wupperthal - has enjoyed immense success on the international cultural stage. They won several gold medals at the World Championships of Performing Arts in Los Angeles in 2015.

For more information, please visit; [www.capewestcoast.org](http://www.capewestcoast.org)

## Sevilla Rock Art Trail, Clanwilliam

The Sevilla Rock Art trail is on Traveller's Rest Farm, 34 km from Clanwilliam, on the R364 regional route over the spectacular Pakhuis Pass. The 5km-round trail along the Brandewyn River includes nine fascinating rock art sites, which are some of the finest examples of San rock art in the region.

This spiritual cultural journey is enhanced by the natural surroundings, the rich birdlife, as well as the indigenous wildlife along the trail, such as springbok, eland, dassies (rock hyrax) and other small animals.

Visitors are required to buy a permit to enter the site at the Traveller's Rest farm stall.

For more information, please visit; [www.travellersrest.co.za](http://www.travellersrest.co.za)

## Truitjieskraal, Matjiesrivier Reserve

The Cederberg is dotted with rock art, but Truitjieskraal, in the Cape Nature Matjiesrivier Reserve, is arguably one of the most impressive sites. Information boards along the Truitjieskraal interpretive trail provide insights into both the San and Khoe cultures, while at the same time educating visitors on the unique ecosystem surrounding the rock art with its various species of animals and plants.

Similarly impressive, located just 20 minutes away from the Matjiesrivier Reserve, is the Elephant Paintings rock art site. These remarkably well-preserved paintings depict three lines of people and a herd of elephants.

To visit these two sites, visitors are required to obtain a permit from the Algeria campsite office or nearby Dwarsrivier farm, home to Cederberg Cellars.

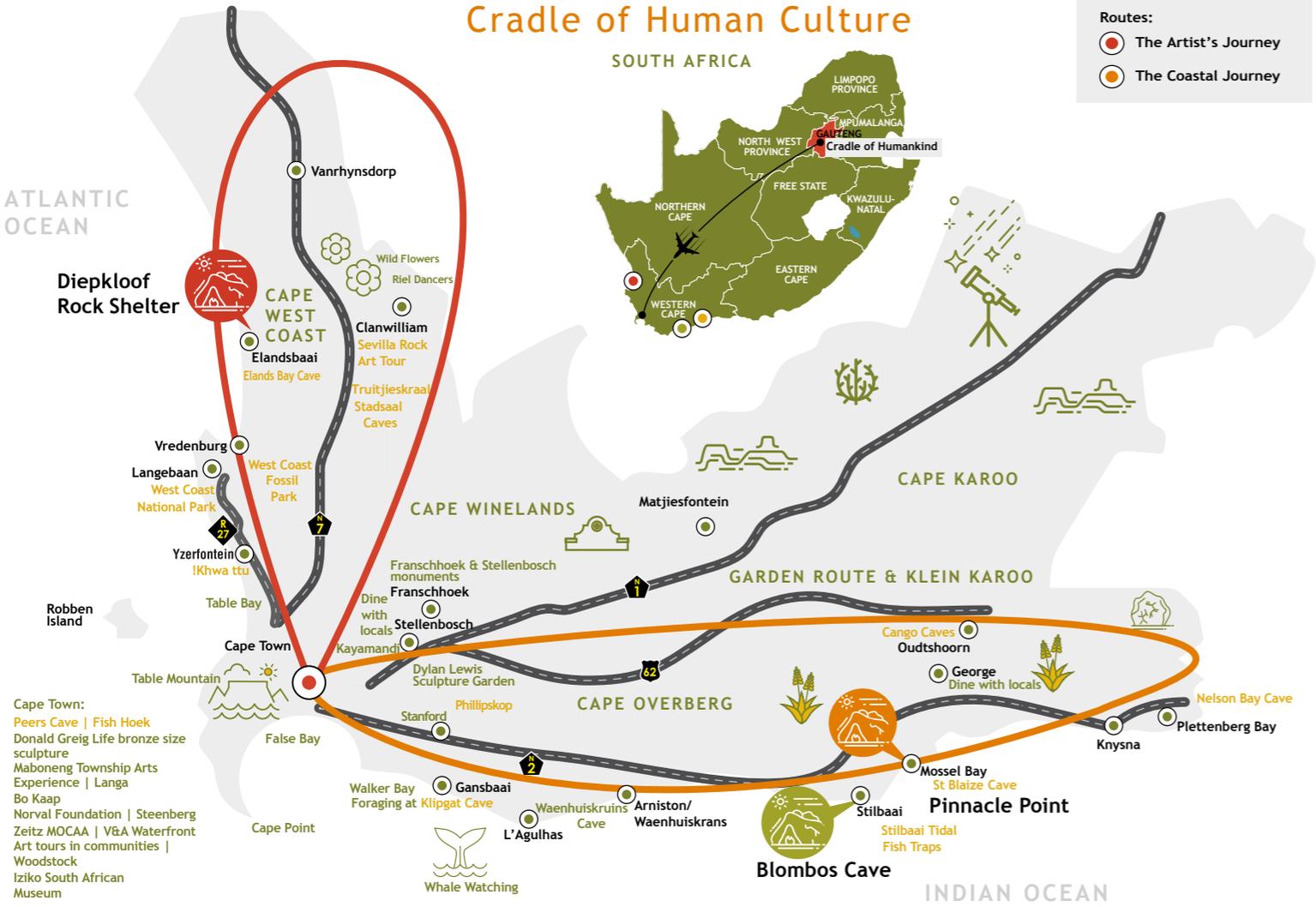
For more information, please visit: <https://www.capenature.co.za/reserves/matjiesrivier-nature-reserve/>



# Cradle of Human Culture

**Routes:**

- The Artist's Journey
- The Coastal Journey



**Cape Town:**  
 Peers Cave | Fish Hoek  
 Donald Greig Life bronze size sculpture  
 Maboneng Township Arts Experience | Langa  
 Bo Kaap  
 Norval Foundation | Steenberg  
 Zeitz MOCAA | V&A Waterfront  
 Art tours in communities |  
 Woodstock  
 Iziko South African Museum

We're human.  
 We're curious.  
 We want to know more, see more,  
 and understand more about people than we did before.

Because as humans,  
 From when we are young  
 we ask questions, search for answers  
 and discover things around us.

Sometimes they're close by,  
 Other times, far away  
 many times, they are at the click of a button,  
 but most of the time, we go back in time.

It is here in Africa that we find our origins  
 It is in Africa that we can discover our past,  
 Examine our present,  
 And contemplate our uncertain future

At the Cradle of Humankind we go back to some of the  
 earliest origins of our species  
 At the Cradle of Human Culture we go back to find  
 evidence of how modern human culture evolved

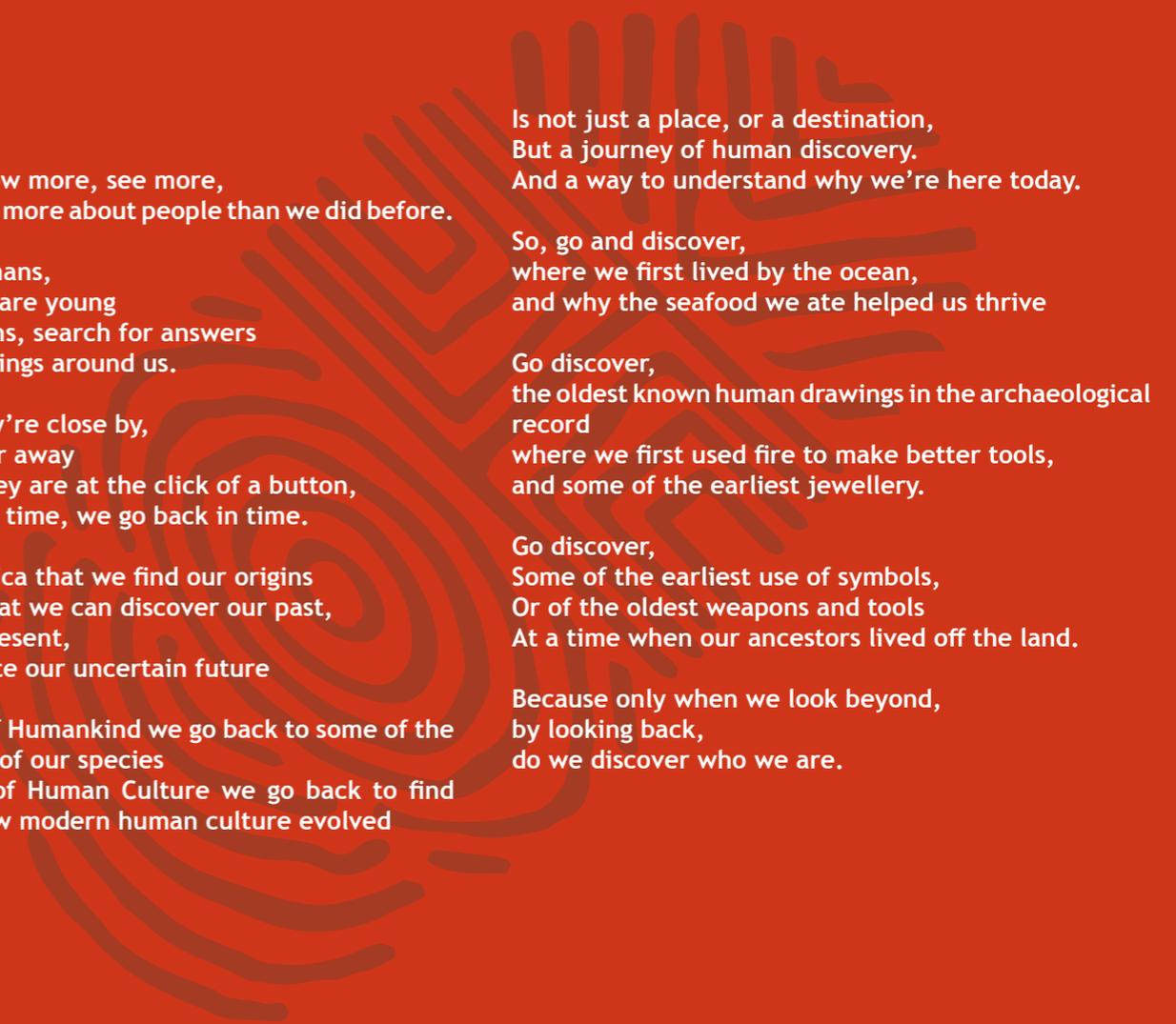
Is not just a place, or a destination,  
 But a journey of human discovery.  
 And a way to understand why we're here today.

So, go and discover,  
 where we first lived by the ocean,  
 and why the seafood we ate helped us thrive

Go discover,  
 the oldest known human drawings in the archaeological  
 record  
 where we first used fire to make better tools,  
 and some of the earliest jewellery.

Go discover,  
 Some of the earliest use of symbols,  
 Or of the oldest weapons and tools  
 At a time when our ancestors lived off the land.

Because only when we look beyond,  
 by looking back,  
 do we discover who we are.





cradle of human culture  
the coastal journey

### Dylan Lewis Sculpture Garden, Stellenbosch

The seven-hectare Dylan Lewis Sculpture Garden in Paradyskloof, Stellenbosch, is set among lush indigenous vegetation. The project was born in 2009 when its creator, the artist Dylan Lewis, started shaping the contours of the garden. A theme integral to his work includes “the untamed wilderness within the human psyche”, which he expresses through his sculptures and their positioning on the landscape.

He has placed more than 60 sculptures in this beautiful setting - ranging from human and shamanic figures to large abstract works and his iconic big cats.

Visit this serene place by appointment to admire the art, be one with nature and experience a sense of spirituality and transience conveyed by this minimalist space. To arrange a visit, email [reservations@dylanart.co.za](mailto:reservations@dylanart.co.za) or call +27 (0)21 880 0054.

### Dine with a local, Stellenbosch

The ‘Kayamandi Township Tour’ and ‘Dine With a Local’ experience offer visitors to Stellenbosch the chance to dine with locals from different backgrounds and learn about their daily lives, listen to their stories, and hear of their hopes and aspirations. Dip into traditional African or Cape Malay cuisine while enjoying local wines from one of the many local estates surrounding the university town.

For more information, please visit: [www.visitstellenbosch.org](http://www.visitstellenbosch.org)

### Phillipskop Mountain Reserve, Stanford

The Phillipskop Mountain Reserve lies 10km east of Stanford. This is one of the few sites with rock art in the Cape Overberg region and the only known site in the Cape Whale Coast. It contains rare yellow handprints attributed to Khoer herders. There are also paintings of a group of men and an antelope representing the San hunter-gatherer tradition.

Phillipskop’s rock art site is reachable through the Phillipskop Nature Reserve with a 2km walk from the reserve’s reception and carpark. The Waterfall Hiking Trail takes the visitors to the foot of the slope up to the cave. There is a short but steep path to the cave near the waterfall; appropriate shoes and steady feet are advised.

Access to the reserve is via a 3km dirt road, which is best accessible by vehicles with a higher ground clearance.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.phillipskop.co.za/news/rock-art-cape-whale-coast>

### Klipgat Cave, De Kelders

Klipgat Cave is located close to the seaside village of De Kelders and it is accessed via the Walker Bay Nature Reserve, managed by Cape Nature. Here visitors will be welcomed by dramatic ocean views.

Klipgat Cave was occupied during the Middle and Later Stone Age from about 80 000 years ago to about 50 000 years ago and then again from 2 000 to 1 200 years ago. Amongst some of the main findings in the cave, archaeologists uncovered some of the earliest human remains of *Homo sapiens*. The bones of early fat-tailed sheep and pottery discovered here show that Khoer pastoralists lived in the area from about 2 000 years ago, one of the oldest dates in the Western Cape.

Detailed information boards at the site will lead the visitors through the daily lives of our ancestors from the Middle Stone Age through the Later Stone Age.

For more information, please visit: [www.capenature.co.za/reserves/walker-bay-nature-reserve/](http://www.capenature.co.za/reserves/walker-bay-nature-reserve/)

## Waenuiskrans Cave, Arniston

Continue your exploration at the picturesque seaside town of Waenuiskrans, also known as Arniston, about 25km from Bredasdorp. Here, discover - though only at low tide! - the massive limestone Waenuiskrans Cave, falling within the Waenuiskrans Nature Reserve. The effort to get there, walking along the beach and scampering up some rocks, is worth it for the incredible views, even though there have been no archeological finds in the cave.

## Tidal fish traps, Still Bay

At Still Bay at least 25 stonewalled fish traps represent the technological and economic evolution of early fishing practices in the area. These traps were built at the correct height to trap fish during a falling tide. They illustrate a traditional fishing method along the Southern Cape coast that endured through the ages. They have been declared a National Heritage Site in 2018 and are located within a Marine Protected Area, managed by Cape Nature.

Local fishermen and farmers have been responsible for the maintenance of these fish traps since at least the early 20th century. More recently the greater community has contributed to ensuring that the local/indigenous knowledge regarding these fish traps is not lost and that they are adequately maintained. These traps will provide visitors with a unique experience from a historical, aesthetic and scientific perspective and will shed light on a traditional fishing method still in use today.

For more information, please visit: [www.explorersgardenroute.co.za](http://www.explorersgardenroute.co.za)

## Blombos Cave, Still Bay

Blombos Cave is a world-famous archeological site, overlooking the sea and located in a private nature reserve not open to the public. Archaeologists have uncovered some of the first evidence of symbolism, cognitive thinking and technological advancement, traits used to define modern human behaviour.

This site was occupied during the Middle Stone Age between 100 000 and 70 000 years ago, although earlier occupation may still be identified as the archaeological excavations proceed. The site was first excavated in 1992, it is currently undergoing excavation and it will continue to be excavated possibly for another decade.

Specific findings include a piece of engraved ochre, which is the first known ochre engraving found in the archaeological record and dated to 75 000 years ago; “the oldest artist’s toolkit”, which is evidence of a 100 000-year-old ochre-processing workshop; “the oldest drawing (or hashtag)” dated to 73 000 years ago and some of the first evidence of body decoration, in the form of perforated estuarine shell beads. Blombos Cave was declared a Provincial Heritage Site in 2015 and it is currently on the tentative serial nomination list of UNESCO World Heritage sites. It is expected to be declared a World Heritage Site within the next few years.

While the site is closed to the public, the small Blombos Museum of Archaeology in Still Bay offers visitors with the possibility of exploring some of the fascinating findings of this site. The exhibition is in the process of being modernized.

For more information on the area, please visit; [www.explorersgardenroute.co.za](http://www.explorersgardenroute.co.za)

## Pinnacle Point, Mossel Bay

At the archaeological site of Pinnacle Point an international team of researchers has found some of the earliest evidence for modern human behaviour. Excavations in the various caves have showed that here, for possibly the first time in the archaeological record, early humans systematically exploited shellfish as part of their diet, heated silcrete (a type of rock) to make more efficient stone tools; made advanced “micro-lithic” stone tools for projectile weapons and consistently ground ochre pigment, either for symbolic or functional purposes.

The early “pyrotechnology” suggests that our Middle Stone Age ancestors recognized that they could substantially alter and improve

a raw material with fire to make it more suitable for its required final use, and that they were capable of planning and executing a long chain of processes to manufacture tools, which is an expression of complex cognition. Pinnacle Point has also been instrumental in the reconstruction of overall environmental changes over the course of its occupation and beyond. Scientists have been able to reconstruct the position of the sea level and of the vegetation that was growing on the Palaeo-Agulhas Plain when the sea level retracted up to 30km from the current caves during glacial periods, such as at 60 000 years ago.

Visitors can plan and book a Point of Human Origins Experience tour to gain profound insight not only into the discoveries at the site, and how Middle Stone Age people were living here between 170 000 and 40 000 years ago, but also to reflect on where we came from, consider where we are now - and where we are heading as the human race.

This site was declared a Provincial Heritage Site in 2012 and it is currently included in the tentative serial nomination list of UNESCO World Heritage sites. It is expected to be declared a World Heritage Site within the next few years.

For more information, please visit: [www.humanorigin.co.za](http://www.humanorigin.co.za)

## Cape St Blaize Cave, Mossel Bay

The cave at Cape St Blaize, below Mossel Bay’s lighthouse, is the site of some of South Africa’s first Middle Stone Age archaeological excavations. More recently, parts of the cave were explored by scientists as part of the Mossel Bay Archaeology Project, which was also conducting excavations at Pinnacle Point Site Complex.

Information boards on site illustrate the history of the site and its importance in the history of archaeology.

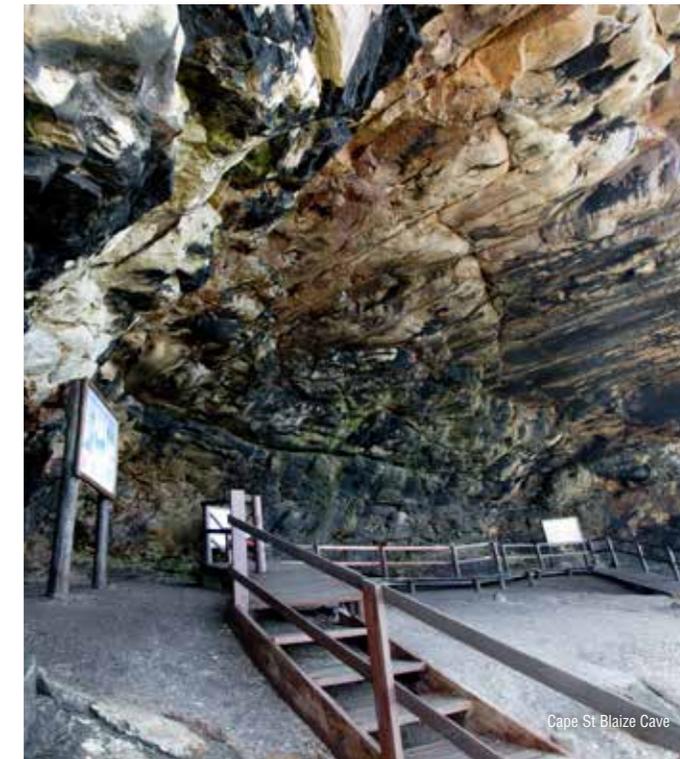
The cave is open to the public and there is no access fee. It is a short walk from the Mossel Bay Waterfront and provides beautiful views of the ocean. It is also located at the beginning of the Cape St Blaize Trail, a 13.5km trail which joins Mossel Bay and Dana Bay and which also crosses the Pinnacle Point Estate.

For more information, please visit: [www.visitmosselbay.co.za](http://www.visitmosselbay.co.za)

## Dine with locals, George

Book a two-hour ‘Dine with a Local’ experience through the George Tourism office to share a home-cooked meal with locals and enjoy music, poetry or dancing together. Diners can experience traditional cuisine, and supporting this local development project.

For more information, please visit: [www.visitgeorge.co.za](http://www.visitgeorge.co.za)



Cape St Blaize Cave

## Cango Caves, Oudtshoorn

The Cango Caves is one of the world's great natural wonders, sculpted by nature through the ages to create limestone formations in a wide variety of colours. Visitors can explore the spectacular underground wonders, including the finest dripstone caverns, vast halls and towering formations.

A beautiful and highly informative exhibition on the first floor of the interpretation centre explains in "A journey through time" how the caves formed and the human species evolved over time. It also describes in detail the intermittent human occupation of the cave and adjacent area starting from about 80 000 years ago, providing a glimpse of how the environment changed over time. Visitors are provided with a detailed explanation of the lives of herders and hunter gatherers and are presented with the excavation of Boomplaas, which was carried out in the 1970s by a team of archaeologists from the University of Stellenbosch. Boomplaas is an archaeological site located only 4km from the Cango Caves and not open to the public.

A rock art exhibition also illustrates the rock art found in the cave and in the overall area and its significance.

Due to a recent increase in visitors, it is essential to book in advance. For more information, please visit [www.cango-caves.co.za](http://www.cango-caves.co.za)



## Nelson Bay Cave, Plettenberg Bay

Make your way to the spectacular Robberg Nature Reserve to track some fascinating archaeological discoveries at Nelson Bay Cave. The site preserves archaeological materials from the Middle and Later Stone Age and thus dates from more than 40 000 years ago up to recent San occupation.

Artefacts ranging from Middle Stone Age tools to 2 000-year-old pottery, graves containing human remains buried in a fetal position and decorated with shells and ochre, and many more cultural finds have been found in the cave.

The site has a spectacular record that documents changes in the environment during glacial and interglacial conditions and illustrates how the sea level during the glacial period was much lower than today exposing the Palaeo-Agulhas Plain, now submerged. As the glacial ice melted around 12 000 years ago, that landscape was obliterated and the coast moved to its current position right next to the cave.

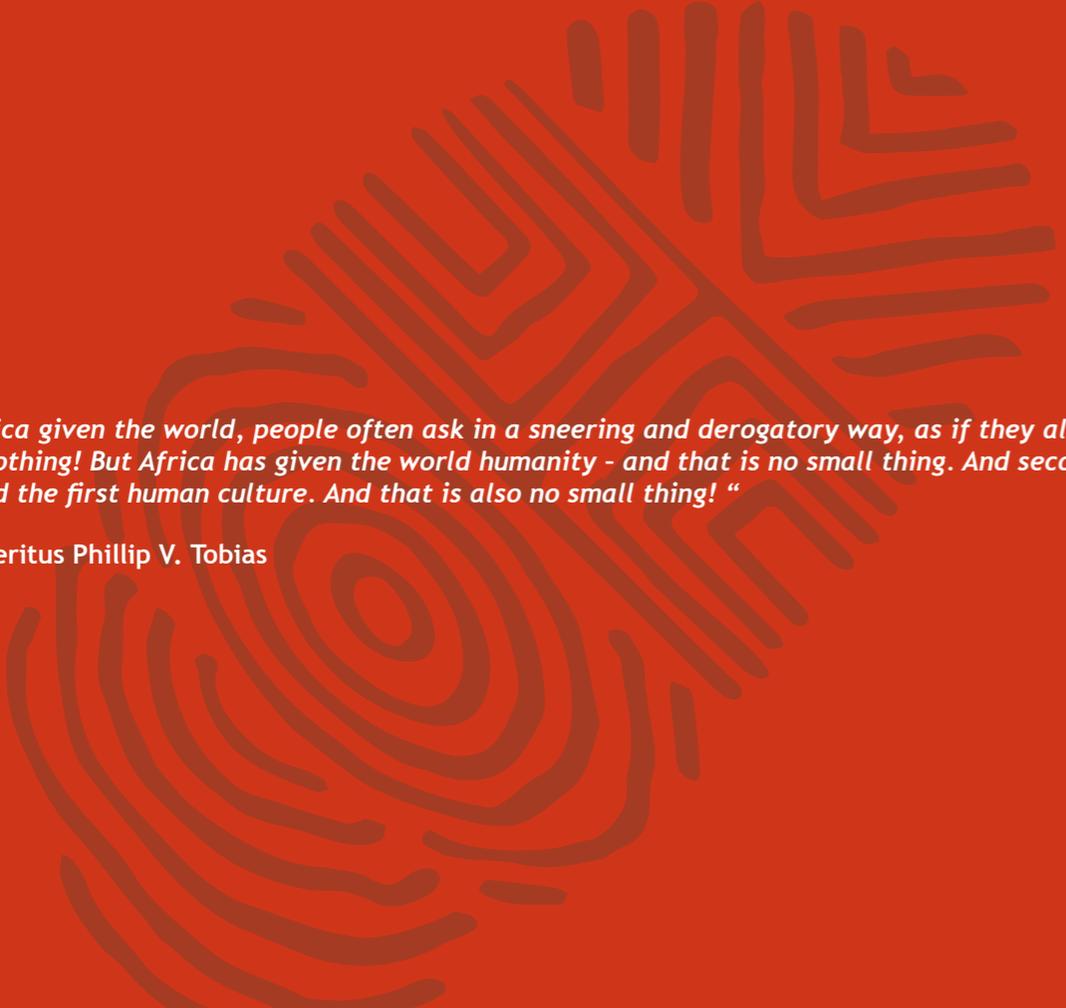
Nelson Bay cave was first excavated in the 1960s, and the results showed that the diet of the early humans who lived here comprised of food ranging from birds, eggs and plants to shellfish, as well as seals and bush pigs.

Access to the site is from inside the nature reserve, about 8km from the coastal town of Plettenberg Bay. Set aside enough time to explore the cave and its beautiful surrounds.

For more information, please visit [www.capenature.co.za/reserves/robberg-nature-reserve/](http://www.capenature.co.za/reserves/robberg-nature-reserve/)

**For more information:**  
[www.cradleofhumanculture.co.za](http://www.cradleofhumanculture.co.za)  
[#cradleofhumanculture](https://twitter.com/cradleofhumanculture)





*“What has Africa given the world, people often ask in a sneering and derogatory way, as if they already know the answer - nothing! But Africa has given the world humanity - and that is no small thing. And secondly, it has given the world the first human culture. And that is also no small thing! “*

- Professor Emeritus Phillip V. Tobias





[www.cradleofhumanculture.co.za](http://www.cradleofhumanculture.co.za) #CradleofHumanCulture



Western Cape  
Government

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