



FIFTH EDITION
SITE GUIDE
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Greg Hamerton
Paragliding and Hang-gliding in SOUTH AFRICA

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Front cover: Herman Venter soaring the laminar cloud over Karbonkelberg, looking towards Llandudno and along the length of the 12 Apostles (photo: Greg Gallagher).

Inset: De Aar, Barrydale and Ngodwana (photo: Patrick McKay).

Back cover: Spreetshoogte, Barrydale, Lion's Head, Map of Africa, Table Mountain

INTRODUCTION

From the Chairman of the South African Hang-gliding and Paragliding Association

Welcome to the flying community of South Africa. I'd like to invite you to join SAHPA. We would value your membership to our association.

This Site Guide has long been the definitive work on South African paragliding and hang-gliding sites and this edition has more pictures, new sites and at last, colour! I am a proud owner of the third edition and have found the book to be indispensable when paragliding around South Africa, whether you're looking for a site, contact details for a club or landowner or just want to know what to take along on a fly away. I'm sure this bigger better version will bring even more enjoyment to pilots.

Enjoy our uncrowded South African skies.

Paul Putter

FOREWORD

by Greg Hamerton

Writing this book has taken me to faraway places and allowed me to meet some great people. Now that you have the book, you have a brilliant reason to have your own South African adventure. There's nothing like road-tripping with your eye on the sky.

This revised version includes great new sites like Koringberg, De Aar, scary Matroosberg (2300m), picturesque George Peak, Fort Mistake, Wigwam and other secret spots. Although this guidebook offers you all the information, it is no substitute for a local pilot's judgement. Please contact a club member to join you on site – some sites are sensitive, and things may have changed since the printing of this book. (Besides, you're going to need a friend to retrieve you when you fly 100km!)

Many thanks to the advertisers who contributed to this edition. Without their enthusiasm and support this book wouldn't have been published in colour.

Join my FRESHAIR mailing list by emailing me (greg@eternitypress.co.za) if you'd like to get site news and the occasional flying story. Join FLYCAST for weekend forecasts of the Western Cape area. On my website (www.eternitypress.co.za) you'll find my latest books, reviews and flying articles.

I wish you white fluffy clouds and a following wind.



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1. UP THE FRONT

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>> A whirlwind tour of South Africa

Welcome to the land of sunny skies. Situated on the southern tip of the African continent, South Africa offers a variety of climates and adventures. Most of the country is raised to 1000m above sea level on a large plateau. An escarpment of mountains separates the arid inland from the fertile coastal plains.

The western third of South Africa has winter rainfall (June-August), and is dry and hot in summer. The eastern two-thirds has summer rainfall (November-March); thunderstorms in the afternoon, especially around Johannesburg, make the peak of summer unsuitable for flying at The Dam. Autumn is mild everywhere. In Winter, the northern sites like Barberton work. Spring transforms the eastern KwaZulu Natal province into an aerial playground - centred around Bulwer. Then we're back to summer, and the consistent big distance-flying to be enjoyed in the Cape Province, notably at Porterville and De Aar.

The WEST section starts in the Western Cape Province, which boasts an over-supply of flying sites. There are sites for every possible wind direction, and for every grade of pilot. In the Cape Peninsula, the sites rely on the Westerly wind to provide soaring conditions. Sites like Noordhoek, Llandudno and Signal Hill provide hours of scenic wonder. Table Mountain stands head and shoulders above the rest, demanding a high level of competence and commitment on its treacherous cliff-launch. When the wind swings to South Easterly, Lion's Head alone is sheltered by the Table Mountain massif, and flying in the lee-side wind-shadow can be fun. Travelling out to Hermanus on the nearby south coast offers a blend of thermic and soaring conditions, with safe landing areas and easy retrieve. On the way there, you will summit Sir Lowry's Pass, which offers thermic cross-country (xc) flights and is the start of a wonderful route through the Cape Mountains.

120km to the north along an almost unbroken chain of mountains, lies the legendary town of Porterville, where most of the xc flying in the Western Cape is enjoyed. A flight here could take you over the dramatic Cedarberg Mountain Range, or to the hallowed goal of the Clanwilliam Dam. It would take an epic flight indeed to reach the distant site of Van Rhyn's Pass, another 200km distant from Porterville, but it is technically possible. The pass is a wild, remote thermic site, and it showcases the stark beauty of the desert. Thornscrub, aloe, cactus and fynbos cover the harsh landscape, and at midday the thermals roar. Five hours drive east from there, and you've reached De Aar, a new well-managed centre for big-distance flying. Further north, Kuruman is the site of many world records for distance and altitude, due to the strong wind and high cloudbases.

Before I go any further in that direction, I'd like to take you through the SOUTH regions, where you'll find the beautiful Garden Route. Flying conditions are mild, the ridges long, and the sea is warm. A holiday atmosphere permeates everything you see, from the rich green forests, to the golden sands, from the grassed launch sites to friendly, laid-back locals. Sites like **Paradise Ridge** and **Map of Africa** are not to be missed, as well as the more thermic **Sedgeview** and the picturesque **George Peak**.

Further inland, **Graaff-Reinet** awaits the eager cross-country pilot, offering a big launch into the semi-desert flatlands. **Bedford** is a magical escape from the world, a secret spot worth visiting, with a 100km+ site record. **Port Elizabeth** offers flying on the coastal plain. The university town of **Grahamstown** is worth a stop-over. Then for some excitement you can travel through the black homeland of Transkei. The badly maintained roads are often crossed by livestock and drunk drivers. Breaking down at night could turn out to be dangerous. The recommended route is to bypass Transkei and Lesotho to the north, passing the **Orange Free State** sites of Bloemfontein (flying at **Botshabelo**) and Harrismith (flying at **Arthur's Seat**) before curling south into the Natal Drakensberg.

There are many sites in the EAST in the Kwazulu Natal Province (KZN), more than listed in this guide, but once you've flown the main sites (like **Paulpietersburg** and **Bulwer**) you'll meet up with the locals who can show you the other grassy slopes. Natal has a large indigenous black population, and is liberally sprinkled with the characteristic thatched mud-huts and cattle of the chiefdoms. The air flows onshore from the warm Indian Ocean, making the weather humid. In summertime, rain dampens flying prospects, but when it is flyable height gains can be impressive due to the lack of inversion layers. Sites close to the Berg (**Drakensberg**) are often threatened by overdeveloped Cumulo-nimbus clouds. Spring-time is best, and a regular competition is held in September each year.

In the NORTH you'll find Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, and North West Province. The Mpumalanga province is a winter haven for pilots yearning for thermic conditions, because winter tends to be dry and cloudless, albeit with strong inversions on most days. The combination gives good, technical thermal flying even though height gains are generally (but not always) restricted. In June there is a yearly paragliding competition held at Barberton, when the winds tend to be NW. Spring offers the most epic conditions, with often very strong thermal activity. Winds tend to be fairly strong.

The escarpment approaches 2000m ASL in places, and the lowlands at the bottom are anything from 500 to 900m ASL. As you can gather, this leaves ample opportunity for paragliding and hang gliding, restricted only by commercial forestry, a shortage of roads up mountains, and very few active pilots. Height gains here are often 2000m or more. Flying is understandably chilly, and xc tends to follow triangular routes due to light prevailing winds. Most of Johannesburg's pilots take the three hour drive on the weekend to reach **Barberton**, **Carmel** and **Vaalkop**. Those who stay at home have the Hartebeespoort **Dam** and the sites at **Rustenberg** (Eagle's Nest and Wigwam) to enjoy.

Rain is mainly in summer, and comes in the form of thunderstorms. The chance of rain is



GRAAFF-REINET



LITTLE BERG

Photo : Blue Sky



HARTEBESPOORT DAM

Photo : Karel Koster

NGODWANA

Photo : Dolphin Paragliding





MAP OF AFRICA

Photo : Dolphin Paragliding

TABLE MOUNTAIN

SUTHERLAND

South Africa



increased by cold fronts (winter rains), tropical air or major low pressure systems over the Mozambique channel. This means that, more than the plateau, Mpumulanga sometimes does get several days of overcast conditions with intermittent rain. (This can fairly reliably be predicted to occur on weekends). It gets more rain than the average for the country.

In parts of the high-lying areas (**God's Window, Kaapsche Hoop**) mist is also very common. Trade winds below the escarpment are east (NE in winter, SE in summer). Above the escarpment, trade winds tend to be NW in winter, SE in summer, with nice Cumulus clouds, sometimes overdeveloping into Cumulo-nimbus.

BEYOND THE BORDERS, you'll find **Namibia**, a large country with only 1.8 million inhabitants of 14 different ethnic groups. Largely a desert, Namibia offers some beautiful landscapes and clear air. Temperatures can be extreme, and distances between towns are large. The best time to fly paragliders is March-June, and September-November.

Zimbabwe is affected by the moist onshore airflow from Mozambique. It is usually warm and moist in summer. The inhabitants are desperately poor. If you're wanting to mount an expedition into Darkest Africa, this is the place to start.

That is the whirlwind tour of South Africa. Of course there is far more out there, and even more remains un-explored. It is well worth the expense to hire a paragliding tour guide to accompany you on your trip. Their rates are usually reasonable and their local knowledge is invaluable. See the various display adverts.

>> **SAHPA** Phone **012 668-1219** Email sahpa@paragliding.co.za

The South African Hanggliding and Paragliding Association (SAHPA) controls and regulates the sport, under the authority of The Aero Club, which in turn reports to the Civil Aviation Authority. We are a self-governing body, and are granted permission to fly 'as long as we remain controlled and not perceived as an aerial danger'. In other words, if we all behave, we won't get bothered by the Authorities. Which means you hold the future of our sport in your hands. Fly into restricted airspace, get blown over the back into the city, or crash on the roof of some politician's house, and the whole sport comes under pressure. So please, act responsibly, for you are not the only pilot in the sky. When flying in a new area, make contact with the local clubs. They keep the sites open for you.

You are required by law to become a member of SAHPA if you fly in South Africa. If you want to learn how to fly, SAHPA can tell you where your nearest paragliding school is. If you're a visiting pilot, you need to complete a temporary membership application. A copy of your pilot's licence together with the licence fee should be sent to SAHPA as soon as possible. Membership gives you the right to fly and includes SAHPA 'emergency rescue assistance' which covers the costs of any transport to hospital should you not be covered by your own insurance policy. Check with the office for the latest fees. You'll need to find a local instructor to sign the form. More details are on : www.sahpa.co.za

To deposit the amount directly to SAHPA, the bank account details are:
SAHPA, Standard Bank, Midrand Branch (Br # 00-11-55), Acc # 202-489-280

You must wear shoes and a protective helmet while flying. Back-protection in your harness is recommended. If you are flying a DHV2/3 (or CEN Competition) wing or higher, you must fly with a reserve parachute, and have the equivalent of a Sports (Advanced) licence. For tandems, you must carry a tandem parachute at all times, and have a Tandem licence.

When on a collision course, pilots must **turn to their right**. When soaring next to a ridge, the pilot who has the **ridge on his right** can not turn, so **has right of way**. The pilot with the ridge on his left must veer out and give way. The **lower pilot** in a thermal **has right of way**, as does the pilot closest to the ground during landing approach.

>> Insurance

Your medical insurers will probably not pay out if you are not licenced to fly. SAHPA membership gives you two kinds of benefits as well : 3rd Party cover (limited to R250 000), and Emergency Rescue Access. The first insures you against damage you may cause to others while you fly (e.g. a car swerves to avoid you on landing, or you crash into a roof). The second covers the cost of helicopter and paramedic call-out (if your own medical insurance won't cover it), and is essential for getting you to hospital on time.

Without the insurance, there may be long delays before the rescue services authorise a helicopter to retrieve you from a crash site, while bureaucrats try to contact European insurers to verify your cover. It is vital that visiting pilots take out temporary SAHPA membership to ensure you can use our Netcare 911 Access Policy. If you phone 082 911 from any crash site, and quote your SAHPA number, they promise to send a helicopter without delay (even with our contract, it is difficult to that service). Get a letter from your foreign Medical Insurers stating that they will cover you for medical expenses and rescues in the event of a flying accident here – and keep it on you. A dying pilot has been refused medical service at hospital because he had no proof of his ability to pay for operations.

>> Licence grades (paragliding)

Student - trainee, must be under direct supervision of a licenced SA instructor.

Basic - having completed a flying course of 40 flights with basic techniques, 4 hours airtime, theory of flight, and a demonstration of good airmanship.

Sports - 150 flights, 20 hours airtime, have completed an SIV (extreme manoeuvres) course, extensive theoretical knowledge, consistently good judgement, club approval. This licence is required to fly DHV2/3 or competition wings, and for challenging sites.

Tandem - Sports Licence, 300 flights, 150 hours, completed a tandem course with rated instructor (usually 15 instructional flights) and 20 additional flights with pilots.

Instructor - 400 flights, schooling experience, instructor + 1st aid course, club approval.

>> Beware! Strong flying conditions

European pilots can find our conditions to be surprisingly strong. South Africa is comparable to Spain. Be careful - things do not work as in the Alps – turbulence is unpredictable, the winds here are stronger, and our flying sites are more remote. In summer, please get local guidance to avoid an accident.

Any of the coastal sites are affected by an **increase in the air density** due to lack of altitude, especially noticeable in Cape Town because of the cold ocean which adds to the effect. A 30km/h base-wind can be strong enough to blow you over the back.

The second effect (noticeable especially in the Western Cape and Namibia) is the inversion layer, a stable high-pressure ‘lid’ usually at 1500m ASL. This causes **sinking air to be more intense**, with greater turbulence on the borders of the thermal column. A 4m/s thermic day at Dasklip can be far rougher than the same conditions in the Alps. Because of this, and the prevalence of dust-devils, avoid scratching close to mountain-faces to gain lift - you need more room for turbulence than you are accustomed to.

Thirdly, **thermals can become stronger** here, especially at the inland sites like Kuruman, and Namibia. Cores of well over 10m/s have been recorded, so beware of flying during the midday. Build up some experience in the mornings and late afternoons first.

The fourth factor is **flying in strong side-on winds**, which we often do at sites like Porterville. The thermals pull the wind straighter onto the ridge, but beware of flying close to the mountain, as it can be awash with a layer of strong turbulence.

Then there’s the wind gradient, which in SA means an **increase in wind velocity with altitude**, the reverse of what happens in the Alps. Most of our valleys are very wide, and it is the larger-scale weather patterns which affect our flying, not the local valley systems. Often, the **surface wind increases in the afternoons**.

Because the ground surface is more exposed than in Europe (rocks, dust, more rocks) **the ground heats up more**, creating a super-adiabatic lapse rate close to the ground. Thermals in this zone are very narrow and intense, often in the form of a dust-devil (or rock-devil, which you won’t see!). Beware of being close to any ground surface.

Finally, don’t forget that **temperatures can be very high in the afternoons**, with low humidity - always fly with plenty of water, some glucose/energy bars, sunblock and a sunhat to avoid dehydration during walkouts. All these factors combine to produce ‘strong’ flying conditions which take some getting used to. Most SA cross-country pilots choose to fly DHV2/3 gliders (or lower) for the added safety.

>> How this guide works

Site name

GRADE PG

GRADE HG

Sorted alphabetically within each region. I've graded them as BASIC, BASIC+ (you need x number of supervised flights with an experienced pilot), SPORTS (you can fly here with a Basic Licence but only under experienced guidance), or SPORTS+ (only for advanced pilots). Most BASIC sites are STUDENT sites if your instructor is with you.

GPS : WGS84 datum. ddmm.mmm (degrees, minutes, decimal minutes). This seems to be the standard amongst pilots. This is different to dd.mm.ss (degrees minutes seconds).

DESCRIPTION: Type of flying, view, characteristics.

WIND: *Prevailing* wind direction in the region. Local terrain effects might channel the wind differently, allowing lee-side launches in certain conditions. For example, Lions Head, which faces west, reads 'W - SW, SE'. If it is actually blowing SE on takeoff, you have a problem. But a prevailing SE over Cape Town forms a wind-shadow, and a thermic SW will be blowing on the launch site. The usual safe parameters for paragliding are between 10 and 25km/h of wind. 'Light' means below 10km/h, 'strong' is 25km/h+ .

LAUNCH: Keep to the defined launch area, as some sites have sensitive land owners.

ALTITUDE: all altitudes are in metres above sea level (ASL), unless specified.

LANDING: check your landing site for wind, obstacles and livestock before flying.

CAUTIONS: Compiled from accident reports, and the author's experience at the site. Some sites have a history of many accidents, so they have a long story with many cautions.

DIRECTIONS: A road atlas of South Africa would supplement this book well.

RECORD: the best xc flights that began at that site.

CARETAKER: controlling club, or person. SAHPA keeps an updated list of members.

PERMISSION: most sites are in nature reserves or private farmland. We are either guests or trespassers, so be polite and friendly at all times. If you should damage anything, notify the caretakers. Your SAHPA insurance should cover third party damage, so you can offer to pay the cost of damages to property and ensure that we don't lose the flying site.

SITES IN THE WEST



Flying in the WEST



*SOARING FROM LION'S HEAD
High above the Atlantic Ocean*

>> Sites in the WESTERN CAPE

SITE	wind	PG	xc	HG	xc	height
Agulhas	SSW	BASIC		B		60m
Bain's Kloof	W	SPORT	118	C		300m
Barrydale	N, S	BASIC	46	A	50	200m
Betties Bay	S	BASIC		S		100m
Blouberg	W, N	BASIC		A		200m
Ceres	SW	SPORT	40	C		1000m
Constantiaberg	E, W	SPORT	20	C		700m
Devil's Peak	N	BASIC		C		250m
Du Toit's Kloof	W	SPORT	20	B		1100m
Franschhoek	WNW	BASIC	25	B		400m
Gansbaai	S	BASIC		A	30	120m
Gordon's Bay	W	BASIC		C		300m
Groot Kanonkop	N, SW	BASIC	32	B		700m
Gydo Pass	SE	BASIC	40	B		200m
Hermanus	S	BASIC	50	A	100	180m
Katbakkies Pass	SW	SPORT	51			100m
Kommetjie	SW	BASIC		A		120m
Koringberg	W-S-E	BASIC				333m
Lion's Head	SW (SE)	BASIC		C		450m
Llandudno	NW	BASIC	40			280m
Macassar	SE	BASIC		B		60m
Matroosberg	N, E, SE	SPORT		C		1600m
Misty Cliffs	SW	BASIC		A		370m
Noordhoek	W, SW	SPORT	14	B, C		750m
Paarl Rock	SE	SPORT		B		350m
Piketberg	E	BASIC	32	B		200m
Porterville	W (SE)	BASIC+	151	A	203	450m
Robertson	S, N	SPORT	26	B		1300m
Signal Hill	WNW	SPORT+	26	C	35	180m
Sir Lowry's Pass	WSW	BASIC+	117			320m
Strandfontein	W	BASIC				43m
Table Mountain	N, W	SPORT+		C		1000m

DESCRIPTION: Thermic and soaring. A long wave-like ridge offers consistent flying conditions. Ridge-lift with a sprinkling of thermals makes for some interesting flying. Hermanus is a relaxing place to fly, although sometimes the thermals and wind-shears can be quite strong. In springtime you may see the whales in the bay. **HG:** smooth glides out to sea interspersed with regular thermals, beach landings and elevator launches.

WIND: S-SE, (SW only beyond mast, dodgy). **GPS:** S34°24.113' E19°14.576

LAUNCH: Clearly defined area on the right of the scenic road, with windsocks and benches for spectators. Please confine your launch to the area demarcated by the yellow rocks (this private land forms part of Meerlust Estate). Or west of the radio tower, landing on the soccer field across the main road, but the air is usually very unpleasant in a SW.

ALTITUDE: 235m ASL, with airspace ceiling at 2300m.

LANDING: Out and to the right, on the left-most of the school fields, avoiding the cricket pitches (strip of hard grass in the centre of the field). The rugby fields closer to the ridge are okay, though beware of wind-shear as you approach the protected lower layers. An emergency landing field is slightly to the left below takeoff, a long, open plot between the houses. It's possible to slope-land at the base of the ridge, but be careful of the low powerlines. The field beside the graveyard is easy to negotiate. Topland behind the fence, behind the launch-site. Please do not land anywhere in front of the road, as this sensitive area is easily eroded and should have as little traffic as possible on it.

HG landing at the school is often difficult. Topland or land on Grotto Beach.

CAUTIONS: ● Please do not land on the golf-course. ● Beware of the E wind, it wraps deceptively up the takeoff site, but is in fact side-on to the ridge and extremely turbulent if moderate to strong. You will find strange 'holes' in the lift, caused by rotor from the big mountains to the east. ● Beware of SW, which is very turbulent as well. ● At the end of the first section of ridge to the left of takeoff is a white trig beacon. This point produces some heavy turbulence if you fly above and behind it - be careful, stay clear and in front. ● When top-landing, be careful of crossing the ridge low, as the cliff edge produces rotor turbulence near the front of the ridge to the left of takeoff. ● Flying to the right of takeoff and crossing the first big gap in the ridge, high-tension powerlines run down the mountain. They are difficult to see in the afternoon. ● **HG:** if there is a strong wind on the sea (white horses), don't top land - go for the beach, or the school.

DIRECTIONS: Take the N2 towards Caledon. After Sir Lowry's Pass, and Houwhoek, you will descend the Houwhoek pass and see the rolling hills before Caledon. Turn left off the N2 on the R43, signposted Hermanus. After some distance you enter the outskirts of Hermanus, an area of cheap labourer's cottages on the left behind a row of trees. Turn left at the white pillars which are marked 'Rotary Way, scenic route'. Follow this tar road until it becomes gravel, and continue for about 1km. You will see a signboard beside the road saying 'Paragliding' and an obvious launch site overlooking the town and the sea.

RECORD: 50km E (Abraham Meyer), 25km N to Caledon (Phil Bristow)

HG: 100km route - Stanford to the E, Hawston to W, back to the launchsite.

CARETAKER: Glen, Meerlust Estate

PERMISSION: none needed.

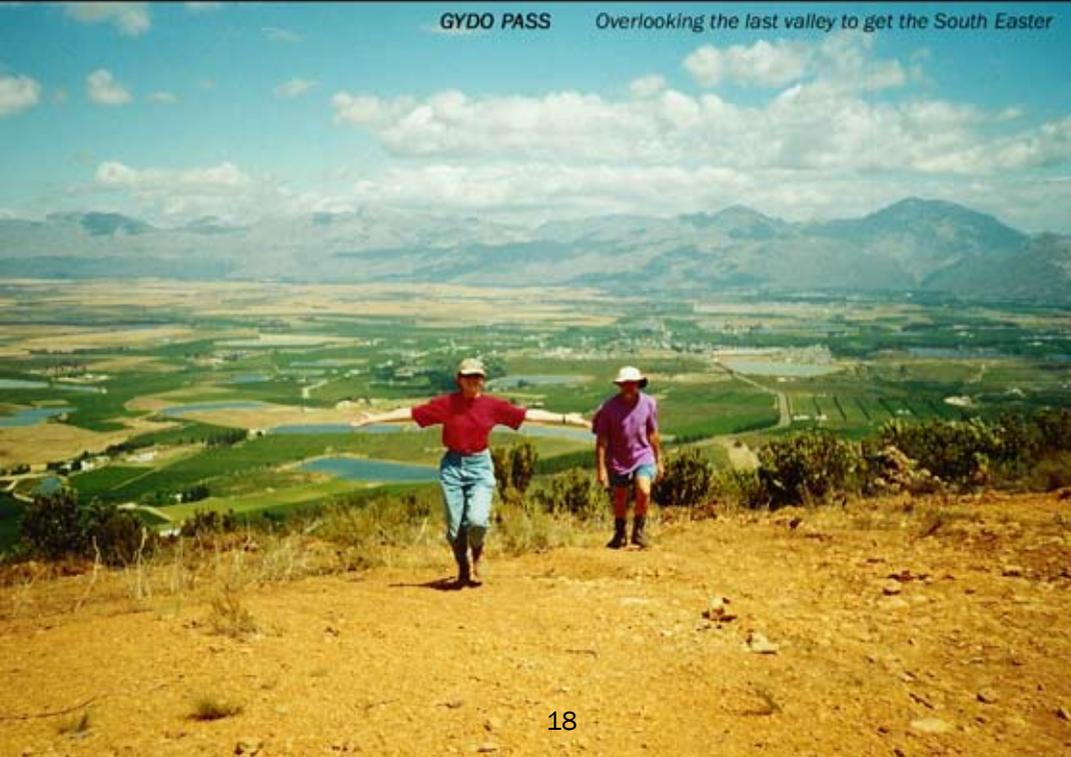


HERMANUS HOTEL *A tricky ridge*



HERMANUS *Photo : James Braid*

GYDO PASS *Overlooking the last valley to get the South Easter*





LION'S HEAD *With the length of the Twelve Apostles available to explore*

LION'S HEAD *Landing at the Glen Club (bottom left)*

Photo : Greg Gallagher



DESCRIPTION: Soaring. Home of the Glen Paragliding Club, a consistent and beautiful site to fly, offering a panorama of Camps Bay and the Twelve Apostles. In the afternoon, Lion's Head heats up and generates a thermic, upslope breeze. Best flying is from 3pm onwards during wind-shadow conditions. Parking is on the back (Cape Town side) of Lion's Head, then a stiff hike is required up the gravel road and around to the front side. Because of the spire-shape of the peak, the wind diverges around it, causing a strong increase in wind speed at both takeoff sites when it is soarable. The wind is usually crossed from the left (S) at the topsite and very strong, and crossed from the right (NW) at the lower site. Don't pioneer a new launch site on the mountain as it is a Nature Reserve.

HG: get permission to drive a 4x4 up to the launch site from Nature Conservation office (RHS of Signal Hill road on way up).

WIND: W-SW, thermic lee-side in SE

GPS: +- S33°56.3' E18°23.23'

LAUNCH: 'Lower launch' is reached after a 10 minute walk, where the path narrows from a jeep-track width into a hiking track. It is a challenging launch through a silver-leaf tree grove from a short net-covered runoff. Be meticulous in your layout and pre-flight checks. This is where to launch if it is soarable and SW. The 'Top site' is reached after another 10 minutes of brisk walking (it is NOT on the top of Lion's Head! It's below the cliffs on the NW side). It is a rocky netted launchsite that is both steep and loose underfoot. The wind is usually crossed from the left here, making good ground-handling and committed launch techniques essential for a safe get-away.

ALTITUDES: Top site 450m (ASL), ceiling at 1200m ASL.

LANDING: On the grassed playing-field in front of LaMed, at the Glen Country Club (it is a bit short for Hang-gliders). The field is rented by the Camps Bay High School from City Council - don't land there if school sports are being played on the field. The Glen PG Club have landing rights and expect you to become a member if you land there regularly. The Camps Bay High School field (above the main road, to the left of the big swimming pool) can be used as an alternative if it is empty. During the summer season the Municipality has told us not to land on the beaches (Camps Bay, Clifton, Glen). There is also a median strip between the upper main road and the lower main road, just above La Med. The lower slopes of Lion's Head can be used to slope-land in an emergency.

● **Hang-gliding** alternative landing is Mouille Point lighthouse.

CAUTIONS: ● Don't leave valuable in your car (although the 'car attendants' do reduce the risk of theft). ● Lion's Head has complex weather systems, so ask the locals for advice. When it is soarable, the strong venturi effect at both takeoff sites can be hazardous. Ensure that your launch is directly into the wind, and that the conditions are within your capabilities. Begin your soaring flight with very short tacks back and forwards until you have established the limits of the venturi-effect at each side of the peak, as penetration into the wind becomes difficult beyond either takeoff site. ● If you are blown over the back, try to fly around the side as much as possible (not directly behind the peak). Turn and run for the end of Signal Hill or Green Point if possible. ● When the wind turns southerly, the spine which runs down to Camps Bay High School from lower launch generates lift

on its windward side, and sink on the leeward side, so fly to the left of the spine to reach the landing field, otherwise you'll be forced to land short. ● In berg-wind conditions (prevailing NE wind), it is possible to sneak off Lion's Head in a thermic cycle. This is a bad idea, because the hot, dry and descending air will try to mix with the cool, moist sea air, making conditions very unstable on the way in to the landing field. There may be a shear layer between the two airmasses with violent lift and sink.

DIRECTIONS: Drive up through Cape Town and take Kloof Nek road up to the pass between Lion's Head and Table Mountain. At the circle, turn right to Signal Hill and continue until the road levels out. You will find a gravel carpark to the right of the road. The path to the launch is on the left as you reach the carpark.

CARETAKERS: Glen, Cape Peninsula National Parks (who upgraded the launch sites)

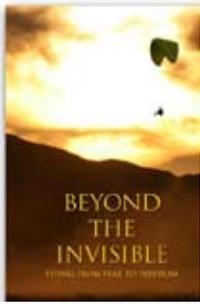
PERMISSION: Wild Card. Guidance by a local pilot at this sensitive site is essential.

HOW THE (SE) WIND-SHADOW WORKS: When the SE wind blows over the Cape Peninsula, it is disrupted by Table Mountain. The wind is deflected upwards, and only returns to the surface far out in Table Bay. This creates a 'wind shadow' in the area between Llandudno and the Cape Town Harbour. As the SE increases in strength, this wind shadow will shrink to protect only from Camps Bay to Green Point, and finally, it breaks down completely (usually when the SE is over 50km/h) and the wind tumbles down over the Twelve Apostles. The size of the wind shadow can be clearly observed by the patterns on the Atlantic Ocean. A wind-line forms in ideal conditions, marking off the end of the SE and the beginning of the calm bubble of sheltered air. There is usually a gentle reverse-wind (NW) blowing in the wind-shadow and La Med, created by the pull towards the low-pressure on the lee-side of the mountain. As long as you fly within the wind shadow, you'll be fine, but heaven help you if you fly too high, or out of the bubble. The SE wind blows you out to sea, and is extremely strong and turbulent, as you are in rotor from Table Mountain. There should be at least a 1km margin area of smooth ocean around the landing field at LaMed. If there are squalls on the water inside the wind-line, where the water should be smooth, don't fly - the wind-shadow is breaking down. If the cloud begins to pour off Table Mountain, through any of the Twelve Apostles, conditions are beginning to deteriorate. Cloud is usually dropping off the front face of TM by this time too. The furthest Apostles can be whited out, more than that and you'll end up in the sea. If you get caught in a dissolving wind-shadow, try to retreat to the shelter of Lions Head, landing on the slope in the main bowl, or on Clifton Beach. Watch the progression of the wind-line, and the speed with which it is changing. If the wind-line has moved onto Whale Rock at the end of the curve of Camps Bay beach, then it is too close and not flyable anymore.

IN SOARING CONDITIONS (SW), the picture changes completely. At sea level the air is dense (especially if cold) and you'll have a lower flying speed than at inland sites. The lower launch will seem becalmed, with very gentle wind. This illusion is because of the site being at the separation point. If you can pull up your glider and ground-handle it above your head, it is very strong. If your glider can pull you strongly back UP the slope, then collapse it and pack away. It will be incredibly strong once you escape from the separation point. The topsite is definitely too strong to launch from and crossed in soaring conditions. The silver-leaf trees always whistle in the venturi as you walk up, but if they are thrashing around, it is inflyable. If there are white-horses on the sea, it is too strong to fly. If there are cat's-paws on the water, parallel to the wind, wait.

>> Other titles from Greg Hamerton

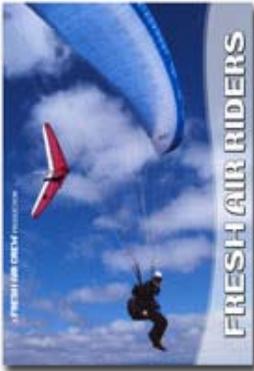
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FRESH AIR RIDERS - This exciting production (by the award-winning adventure film specialists Fresh Air Crew) is a great introduction to South African cross-country flying. Filmed on location at Lion’s Head, Barrydale and Porterville, the film follows the aerial journey of Johan Anderson (SA HG Champ) and Greg Hamerton as they follow their dreams through the summer skies.

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