

THANGAMI SAFARI SPA

THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THANGAMI

A lot has changed since Leisure Wheels last featured this wonderful place and it now seems set on becoming the adventure capital of Zululand.

Situated seventy-seven kilometres south of Vryheid, Thangami Safari Spa lies almost halfway between Durban and Johannesburg and provides the ideal place to break your trip. But it would be a shame to spend only one night, as there is so much to keep you occupied. Still under the ownership of Gert Uys, new kid on the block, Des Springhall, the dynamic manager and adventure instructor, is set to make big changes to the positioning of Thangami. With the emphasis now on adventure activities this Spa is set to offer the visitor seven glorious experiences to suit the various needs of even the most jaded traveller. Dubbed “The Seven Wonders of Thangami” they include 4x4 driving, adventure sports, mud pools and mineral spa, a historical experience, bird and game viewing, hunting, and of course the comfortable accommodation.

The 4x4 driving experience is broken into four sections. Firstly there is an obstacle course for the visitor to test his skills. This includes a balance beam, a 45° roll over slope, some seriously sandy inclines and declines and a log bridge crossing. Training courses are also offered by Thinus Kruger, who is the trail consultant from 4x4 Out There Club. Once you have mastered this there is the Thangami Trail, a 45km grade five track that requires low range, high clearance and the occasional use of diff-lock - no soft-roaders on this route. This is definitely for the experienced driver as it entails some axle-breakers and serious inclines and declines over loose boulders and at one stage drops 300m in 100m with a 90° turn at the bottom. There are also several river crossings, which require technical knowledge during the wet season.

There is another trail suitable for soft-roaders called the Tygerskloof Route. This is 65km and takes you to the top of the Ceza Mountain through patches of the indigenous Ngome Forest, resplendent with tree ferns and cycads. There are plenty of lookout points along the way and you will pass Execution Cliff, from which King Shaka used to toss his enemies. Excellent maps of both these trails are available with GPS waypoints and points of interest marked on them. The fourth section of the 4x4 experience is the new quad and mountain bike track that has been laid out for the visitor’s enjoyment. Quads are available if you don’t have your own.

Apart from the off-road driving experience a series of adventure sports is now available at Thangami. Abseiling at a scenic spot overlooking the Black Umfolozi is a must, as well as a traversing cable slung between the gorge’s cliffs. Night orienteering and clay pigeon shooting is also offered, while an obstacle course is in the process of being built, complete with climbing wall and foeie slide. These adrenalin sports are suited to team building exercises and school group activities and Des will tailor-make a package to suit your company’s needs.

A visit to Thangami is not complete however without a trip to the mud pools. A number of fountains ooze warm, soothing mud from the riverbed – just the thing to rejuvenate you after all the adrenalin. The area also has hot mineral springs and the swimming pools at the main complex boast 37 minerals at a temperature of 41°C. The site of the eye used to be used by King Shaka for bathing, and is now where the Jacuzzis are situated – a must to pamper tired bodies and minds.

Wildlife is prolific in the area and a range of plain game is present. If you are lucky you may even spot a leopard, serval or caracal. Birding is excellent with over 365 species listed. Giant eagle owls occur here, as do martial and crowned eagles, and ground hornbills and bald ibis both nest on Thangami.

The area is steeped in history and the Black Umfolozi valley forms part of the area in which King Shaka grew up and hunted. Mpande, another Zulu king, was crowned on Thangami land and King Dinizulu hid in caves in the area during the Zulu civil wars. Pots can still be found in these caves. It is possible to do a Zulu cultural walking trail and spend nights in these very caves.

Accommodation at Thangami is varied, from the comfortable 2-sleeper chalets to the sumptuous honeymoon suite complete with its own Jacuzzi. A dormitory is also available that sleeps 32 and there is a private bush chalet overlooking the Black Umfolozi that sleeps seven. All accommodation has a kitchenette, bathroom with shower, and some units even have their own spa bath. Camping and caravanning is available and the scenic sites are all electrified. Accommodation can be self-catering or you can eat at the restaurant where simple pub fare is available. Wedding and conference groups can be catered for and there is a large screen TV for that special rugby match. An attractive deck overlooks the mineral pools and meals can be taken outside.

With all this and more, Thangami is truly your place in the sun.

TRAVEL PLANNER

WHAT IT COSTS

Prices vary according to the type of accommodation booked and whether it's in season or not and range from camping at R45,00 per stand to the honeymoon suite at R700,00 per night for two. Enquire about special rates for group bookings.

WHERE TO BOOK

Phone (034) 942 2001 or Fax: (034) 942 2002 or Cell: 083 256 6036/7 or 083 235 3300 or E-mail: info@thangami.co.za or visit the website on www.thangami.co.za.

GPS WAYPOINTS

S27° 58.99; E31° 01.91 – turnoff from main tarred road between Vryheid and Melmoth.

S27° 56.09; E31° 12.64 – turnoff at Black Umfolozi Clinic

S27° 59.79; E31° 18.61 – turnoff to Thangami Safari Spa from main gravel road

LIST OF CAPTIONS

1. A steep sandy incline on the obstacle course
2. The balance beam on the obstacle course
3. The balance beam on the obstacle course
4. The balance beam on the obstacle course
5. The atmospheric bar at Thangami
6. The log bridge crossing on the obstacle course
7. One of the bedrooms in the 10-sleeper chalet
8. An axle breaker on the obstacle course
9. Due to heavy rains the tracks were very muddy
10. Due to heavy rains the tracks were very muddy
11. Due to heavy rains the tracks were very muddy
12. The deck overlooking the mineral pools
13. All the swimming pools at Thangami are mineral water
14. A quad track has been laid out for the adventurous
15. A quad track has been laid out for the adventurous
16. River crossings can be tricky when the water is high
17. River crossings can be tricky when the water is high
18. River crossings can be tricky when the water is high
19. The exterior of the 2-sleeper chalets
20. The scenic Black Umfolozi River. There are lots of crocs
21. On trail after crossing the Black Umfolozi
22. The grasslands boast a wealth of birdlife
23. The 2-sleeper chalet
24. A steep decline on the obstacle course