

SHARK POINT WALK

Total distance: 9km

Difficulty: 5/10

To experience an exhilarating ramble to the Shark Point Nature Reserve your first steps are through the resort and onto the beach. On the beach, there are points to guide you.

The lighthouse is on your right, a national monument, 156 steps to the lamp room, 2, 75 million-candle power, and the highest masonry tower on the South African coast. Guided tours occur daily. To your left you will be able to see Shark Point in the distance looking remote and exciting. Set off towards it.

Where the beach ends and the rocks begin, is the place where the sea is most alive. Here you find excellent oysters on the rocks as well as black mussels. The fishing is usually good here at the junction of rocks and sand.

Shortly after the rocks, you will find yourself on Shelley Beach. Lovely shells can be found here. Permits are now necessary to collect shells for anyone over twelve years. You can buy a permit for R50-00 from the Post Office.

Look out for the resident Oystercatchers that live on Shelley Beach. They are black, medium- sized birds with strong, pointed, red beaks. They are on the endangered species list. Unfortunately, they lay their eggs in the zone just above the high water mark. The eggs tend to be trodden on or dogs harass the chicks.

After Shelley Beach, the track goes over High Rocks. This is another popular fishing spot especially for Galjoen in the winter months.

The middens are now visible. You may stop and scratch around. Please do not remove any items, as middens are a protected national monument and it is illegal to remove any items or artefacts from them.

There are good stands of fynbos just above Sandy Cove. Sandy Cove is the lovely picnic and swimming spot, you pass on your right. Here it is worthwhile to have a closer look at the fynbos.

Fynbos is very important to our coastal ecology. Fynbos is the common term for the Cape Floral Kingdom, the sixth and smallest of the six floral kingdoms in the world. Fynbos occurs only in a thin band from the Western Cape eastwards to Port Elizabeth on both the coast and the surrounding mountains.

The term ' Fyn' denotes the fine structure of the leaves of most fynbos plants. The Fynbos in our region is a particularly rich species. Many of the plants that grow here are found nowhere else. Garlic Bucchu is one of these plants. It has a strong fragrance characteristic to this area.

Finally, you walk over the little neck and arrive on the St Francis Bay side. Here you are able to look at St Francis Bay and on to Paradise Beach and Jeffrey's Bay.

The wreckage on the Point is the remains of the yacht 'Genesis' (formerly called, Wesbank).

The Genesis, was a racing yacht built out of technically advanced Kevlar laminates for the first Cape to Uruguay. It was on a delivery run to Durban in October 1994 when it ran aground. Exact details are not known as to the cause of the accident. It is thought that the crew rounded the Lighthouse point in the dark at 4am. They would then have seen the hue of the lights of Jeffrey's Bay beyond Shark Point. Jeffrey's Bay probably was mistaken for Port Elizabeth. They then would have sailed in a direct line towards Shark Point and hit on 'The Tande', a reef of black rock just off the Point. Two of the six-crew members lost their lives in the incident. The shattered mid-section of the hull is still there.

Look out for whales, dolphins, Mako shark, penguin and otters. These can be seen seasonally.

The light point on Shark Point was constructed a few years ago after vessels frequently had run aground. Since the establishment of Port St Francis, there is even more reason for the light.

The Point is an ideal place for fishing as one is able to cast into deep water while standing on the rocks. Most fishing is done by way of spinning and not with bait. Elf, yellowtail and garrick are caught here. It is most unusual to catch garrick and yellowtail from the shore.

We hope you enjoy the excursion!