



At a glance

LOCATION Tsitsikamma on the Garden Route in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province

NOTEWORTHY Indigenous forest, spectacular scenery, coastline, good service, friendly people, luxurious accommodation

PRICE RANGE Low season tariffs start at R690 for B&B chalets, R1,600 for self-catering family chalets, and R920 for lodge luxury suites per person sharing

CHILD FRIENDLY Chalets all ages; lodge from 12 years up

LANGUAGE English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa

ACTIVITIES Sauna, Jacuzzi, hiking, swimming, rowing, mountain-biking, canopy tours, kayaking, bungee jumping, black water rafting, and visiting Tsitsikamma National Park, Storms River Mouth and Storms River Village

OWNERS Frans and Meg Gerber

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After leaving the N2 highway in the heart of South Africa's stunningly beautiful Garden Route, and driving through some 7km of plantations to The Fernery, you immediately get the feeling that something special awaits you. The feeling is enhanced by the wonderful

smells of plantation pines, the abundance of ferns carpeting the plantation floor, the ancient indigenous Tsitsikamma forest, a riot of fynbos and a soft mistiness coming off the Indian Ocean, all combining into a magnificent natural scent that no Parisian perfume can ever hope to emulate.

Perhaps this is how owners Frans and Meg Gerber also felt when they first arrived here from Johannesburg with their three young sons back in 1985 to start a new adventure. But whereas they were met by untamed wilderness, we were met by the fernery and the magnificent lodge and chalets run by general manager C J Muller and his able staff. The latter must count among the friendliest people in the world!

This 4-star award-winning lodge in the Tsitsikamma – derived from the Khoekhoe language meaning place of sparkling or clear water – is the ideal place to rejuvenate and reconnect with nature.

Frans and Meg gave up city life to establish a fern exporting business on the land that had belonged to Meg's deceased father...and to build their dream home perched high up on the edge of a cliff that forms part of the breath-taking Sandrift River gorge.

They first built The Fernery with its magical display of indigenous ferns and running water, followed by a number of secluded logwood chalets. In 2001 they turned their lovely home into a lodge which is now enjoyed by visitors from all over the world.

Guests have a choice of staying in luxury suites in the lodge, or staying in the chalets. Each chalet is tucked away privately on the edge of the gorge, offering spectacular views of the waterfalls, black-water pools, cliffs, mountains, plantations and the sea.

Our B&B chalet was the perfect place to return to after a day exploring the many delights of the area, sitting back on the wooden deck and sipping a refreshing drink, taking in the scenery, and listening to the ample birdlife. On warm nights you can relax with a fine bottle of wine and good company in the outdoor Jacuzzi on the edge of the cliff. For the colder nights the lodge and chalets have cosy fire places.

Enjoy mouth-watering cuisine in the Cellar Restaurant and definitely do try the very delicious mushroom soup! Other options include doing your own barbecue on the deck of your chalet, or a picnic at one of the cliff top picnic decks. In both cases the chef will prepare everything for you.

The lodge and surrounding area offers plenty to keep you busy. The Fernery is where you can once again get close to nature and put the sparkle back into your life, whether simply taking in the views, relaxing with a good book, listening to the sound of river water rushing by, or embarking on any of the local adventures on offer.

