

# GARIEP DAM NATURE RESERVE

## **What climatic conditions can be expected?**

The climate is also typical of the Karoo with high summer and low winter temperatures. The annual rainfall varies between 300mm and 500mm per annum.

## **The landscape, plants and animals**

The reserve is 16500 ha in size and is neighbored by private land owners, mostly small stock farmers. It is divided into two management sections of which the one part of 6000ha is fenced off with a game proof fence. This section is accessible to the public and provides a variety of game and birds for viewing. The other section is not accessible to the public and is mainly utilized as a breeding camp for some of the largest herds of springbok and black wildebeest in the Free State.

This reserve of contrasts with its multiple kopjes and rocky ridges are connected by planes and the vegetation varies from grasses, herbs, small to medium sized shrubs and a few single standing trees, typical of a dry Karoo landscape.

Gariep Dam was completed in 1972 and is the largest human made water body in South Africa and with full capacity has a surface area of just over 36000ha. The 914m long and 88m high concrete construction forms a retaining wall that blocks up the water for about 80km.

Wild olive and especially karee grows along the ridges, while the open veld consists of grass interspersed with Karoo bushes.

Animals that can be seen are eland, kudu, gemsbok, blue wildebeest, red hartebeest, blesbok, impala, springbok, mountain reedbuck, klipspringer, steenbok and duiker. Other animals that also occur in this area but are not so regularly seen include the aardwolf, cape fox, bat-eared fox, porcupine, aardvark, brown hyena, and various species of wild cats, mongoose and other small mammals.

Gariep Nature Reserve also boasts with a bird population with as many as 242 different species. Amongst these species are raptors such as the scarce tawny eagles, martial eagles, black eagles and numerous fish eagles with their call so peculiar to Africa. Larger bird species such as ostriches, blue cranes, secretary birds and bustards are regularly seen. Further is this reserve also the second recorded place in the Free State Province where the Namaqua sandgrouse breeds. The water bird population includes a variety of water birds such as spur winged geese, Egyptian geese, South African shelducks, whitefaced ducks, yellow billed ducks, cape teals and lots more.

Fish species include carp, barbel, yellow fish and mudfish.

## **What facilities are available?**

Overnight facilities include 7 self catering chalets. There are three 5-bed chalets and four 6-bed chalets with a view on the lake and the islands. The chalets are equipped with bedding, crockery, cutlery, cookware, stove, refrigerator and a microwave oven.

For those who rather prefer camping there is a camping area with 15 stands supplied with electricity. There is also a communal ablution facility.

For the anglers there is an angling shore of about 10km.

Slipways and boathouses are available for the boating enthusiast.

No shops are available and visitors must bring their own provisions.

## **Recreational activities**

- All types of aquatic sport can be enjoyed.
- The dam offers the serious angler a big challenge and hours of relaxation to the rest of the family.
- Visitors are welcome to walk through the reserve and enjoy the nature.
- 25 Kilometers of tourist roads allow visitors ample opportunity for game viewing.
- The retaining wall with 13.2km of passages inside the wall.
- The hydro-electric power station of ESKOM that supplies electricity to destinations as far as Gauteng and Cape Town. (Guided tours for the above-mentioned, can be booked at Water Affairs and ESKOM respectively)
- Gariep State Fish Hatchery.
- The Rubber-duck Nationals – The Gariep 500 is hosted annually in February.
- The international Gliding Championships is also hosted in December / Early January each year.

## **Who do I contact?**

The Tourism Officer  
Gariep Dam Nature Reserve  
PO Box 18

**Gariep Dam**  
9922

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Fax: 051 – 754 0108  
E-mail: [vdbergm@detea.fs.gov.za](mailto:vdbergm@detea.fs.gov.za)

## **What, where, when?**

❖ Hours: Gate: 07h00 – 18h00  
Office: 07h30 – 16h00

Road signs indicate the turn-off on the N1. The reserve is 200 km south of Bloemfontein and 8 km to the east of the N1.

