

Apart from its abundant wildlife, Mpumalanga is filled with small country towns surrounded by breathtaking mountain scenery. Visitors can check the old mining town of Pilgrim's Rest or admire the views from the Blyde River Canyon, Bourke's Luck Potholes and God's Window which will surely be a memorable experience.

Panorama Route day tour (part of Kruger Park package):

Visit the Blyde River Canyon, Bourke's Luck Potholes. Visit the historical town Pilgrim's Rest, Waterfalls etc.

Pilgrims Rest.

With a population of only about 1800 people - its history and its traditional feel has made this town a National Monument since 1986, so the town's original architecture remains largely unchanged since then. Pilgrims Rest was born during the infamous Gold Rush. Alluvial Gold was first discovered in the stream which runs through the valley in 1873 by a prospector named 'Wheelbarrow' Alec Patterson.

Alec Patterson acquired his name as he always pushed his belongings in a wheelbarrow wherever he went - sounds easy, but as you go towards Pilgrims Rest and see the dramatic scenery and steep slopes you will have an added respect for the man!

As the news of his discovery spread, the valley's population grew, as the gold found there was of good quality. By the end of 1875 the town was flourishing with stores and other establishments. After many prosperous years; mining stopped in 1972.

Today Pilgrims Rest is mainly a tourist attraction, and is well worth a visit during your stay in Mpumalanga. There are some cafes and restaurants although it is a gorgeous area for a picnic in the valley; also there are many craft shops and stalls throughout the town.

Interesting fact: At the graveyard, every single grave was laid facing in the same direction, except for the famous Robber's Grave which is laid perpendicular to the rest, emblazoned simply with a cross and the large type words of Robbers Grave. It is as the name suggests the grave of a robber who was shot stealing a tent from one of the miners. A tent represented a "home" so was the most valuable of any individuals belongings, stealing this tent was a most grievous crime and the punishment was meted out in the extreme.

### Blyde River Canyon.

Coordinates: 24°33'50"S 30°48'27"E / 24.56389°S 30.8075°E / -24.56389; 30.8075

This is one of the most spectacular green canyons in the whole of Africa. View points are situated at the top of the 800 meter high gorge, and on a clear day spectacular views which go on for miles can be taken in.

By some measures it is the third largest canyon in the world, after the Grand Canyon in the United States and the Fish River Canyon in Namibia. By any definition it is one of the largest canyons on earth, unquestionably being the largest 'green canyon' due to its lush subtropical foliage, and it has some of the deepest cliffs of any canyon on the planet and is known as one of the great wonders of nature on the African continent.

Dominating the gorge is the Three Rondavels, carved out by the elements over the years. These huge, round rocks are thought to be reminiscent of the houses or huts of the indigenous people, known as rondavels. In the summer months beautiful red fruits grow over the stamvrug shrubs which grow around the verge of the gorge.

### Gods Window.

This is a popular vantage point along the Drakensberg escarpment in Mpumalanga. It is situated at the southern extremity of the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve.

At God's Window, majestic cliffs plunge over 700 meters to the Lowveld and the game reserves which have made the area one of Africa's prime wildlife destinations. From this Escarpment—a 250 km long rampart of sheer cliffs—opens a view into a lush forest, the Eden-like aesthetic appearance of which prompted the name. On a clear day it is possible to see over the Kruger National Park towards the Lebombo Mountains on the border with Mozambique.

Yet more breathtaking views of the Lowveld can be taken in here, from the car parking area, walking routes are popular for the wonderful flora that flourishes in the area, also a patch of indigenous forest can be explored.

### Long Tom Pass.

The Long Tom Pass gets its name from the Long Tom cannons used during the Anglo-Boer war. The original Long Tom Pass was a treacherous one, steep gradients hairpin bends and hair raising drops. It was originally the route followed by pioneer wagon drivers transporting goods from Mozambique to Lyndeburg. The road tumbled over the so called Devil's Knuckles, and many wagons were lost in this area as it was so dangerous

The road followed down to Spitskop and then across the Lowveld, which in those days was a dangerous area where wild animals roamed freely, this coupled with the mosquitoes made it a difficult journey. Today as you travel on the new tarred road you will still see the old road twisting over its dangerous course. This area is also rich in vegetation, eucalyptus and pine trees are planted here and the scene is dominated by the peaks of Mount Anderson and Mauchsberg.

Bourkes Luck Potholes.

Yet another popular destination for Mpumalanga tourism, Bourkes Luck Potholes are named after Thomas Bourke, who was involved in the gold mining in the area.

Today the potholes are preserved as an attraction. You will see how the river has eroded the rocks and created unusual potholes along the course of the river.

There are two bridges to cross over the potholes to the other side where visitors can take a closer look at the intriguing shapes of the rocks landscape.