

## **The History and Development of the Kruger National Park of South Africa**

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Kruger National Park, which is named in memory of Paul Kruger. He was former President of the South African Republic from 1883 to 1900. The first European to explore the Kruger National Park area was a Dutchman named François de Cuiper in 1725, who was at Cape colony leading the expedition of the Dutch East India Company. Despite the arrival of Cuiper in the eighteenth century, it was only in the nineteenth century about 1838 that an outpost could be established. Rumours about abundance of animal-wealth harvesting; elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns and skins of various animals and, discovery of gold lured hundreds of Europeans and farmers to migrate to this land. Kruger National Park had become a trophy hunting ground and the hunters secretly traded the skins and horns of the animals of the region to the outside world. This was the main reason why Paul Kruger became concerned with the rapid destruction of wildlife in the region. As a result, he persuaded the Parliament of the Transvaal to preserve the region. The Skukuza Library has important and relevant documents which are related to the history of the Kruger National Park.

Evidences which are available in this library shows that the Stone Age people wandered for hunting and gathering in this area. The attractive rock paintings made by their next generation are still found throughout South Africa. The Kruger National Park is not only a symbol of the soul of the African jungle, but this Park is one of the regions in the world where humanity is born. The grasslands of the Park and the mixed bushes here are a boon for the environment, this is the whey area from which human ancestors started life about two and a half million years ago. This species of human was a generation between Homo erectus, Homo sapiens and a primitive species of modern humans - Homo sapiens sapiens. Early crude stone tool kits and Middle Stone Age tools can still be seen here.

Thulamela culture (Stone Walled site) whose time is believed to be from around the 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries is seen in the northern areas of the Kruger National Park. Further evidence from the Limpopo Valley and Mapungubwe indicates that the area engaged in active trade in 900 CE with India and possibly Chinese ships docked on the coast of Mozambique. But various types of commodities were purchased from the southern African interior and brought to the beach to trade. These included animal skins, ivory products, gold and copper items. These items were mainly used in the south. Africans were flown in from Botswana and Zimbabwe, and then ships sailed towards the Indian Ocean via the Limpopo River. The artifacts made of copper, gold and iron still tell the untold story of the ancient human

heritage of the Park. Kruger National Park has a long history of early human life, spanning from the early Stone Age to the Iron Age. A fundamental experience of life is gained by visiting this Park. The Park provides an opportunity to open a person's knowledge eye and to deeply understand the history associated with the collective memory of humanity and try to tell them that there was a time when this region was the birthplace of our ancestors. The earliest ancestors of mankind lived and hunted in Kruger Park.

Every tourist visiting the Kruger National Park will appreciate Paul Kruger's pioneering work towards protecting wild life. The Park is spread over an area of approximately 19,485 km. Different types of huge trees and thick shrubs are found in the Park, such as: Mopan, Babool, Marula and Baobab etc. The Park is home to elephants, lions, leopards, buffalo, rhinoceros, zebra, impala and many types of birds. Although various perennial rivers pass through this Park, the problem of drought persists, due to which artificial water arrangements have to be made often. Many perennial rivers flow in the Kruger National Park and all of them originate from outside the Park. This has a significant impact on the Park on both water flow and water quality which is also a challenge that the Park will have to be prepared to meet the industrial and public needs of water and to maintain a healthy ecosystem in the future. The Park's six major rivers that is located entirely within the Park itself are; Sendenz, Mlondozi, Nmvavitska, Biyamiti, Nwenetsi and Sveni.

In general, the weather of Krueger National Park suits every tourist. The Kruger National Park does not receive a lot of rain even on rainy days. Even during the rainy season, it does not receive more than seven days of rain in a month. Kruger Park is sunny on most days. In the winter season, the average daily temperature goes down to about 10 degree centigrade. The average mid-summer temperature is up to 40 degree centigrade. October to April month is summer and from May to September is winter season. Summer days in Kruger National Park are hot and humid and although the Park's landscape is beautiful for taking photographs, foliage growth and poor visibility caused by rain makes it hard to spot the animals. In winter, as the dry season caves in, visitors have enough opportunities to spot the animals as the chance of vegetation obstructing the view becomes less.

The Kurger National Park was declared as a game reserve in 1898 by Paul Kruger. He first drew the attention of the government in 1884, towards the need to protect the animals of this region. But the government continued to remain indifferent. It took the government nearly 12 years to understand and implement the importance of Paul Kruger's conservation proposal. It was only in 1902, J.S. Hamilton was appointed the first warden of the Park. The South African government passed the park act on 31 May 1926, and with it the Sabi and Shingvedzi Game Reserve merged into the Kruger National Park. The first entry fee of one pound was laid in 1927. The S.H. Memorial Library also has some important documents related to the early development of the park. The Park has more than 254 cultural heritage sites, including about 130 recorded rock art sites. The Kruger National Park area also has many historical and thrilling tales of the Nguni, Europeans, explorers and settlers. Thulamela and Masorini have important archaeological ruins. The primary objective of declaring Kruger National Park as a National Park was for the preservation of

natural resources. It was also attempted to ensure that the Park would not go astray for the purpose of preserving the nature and inspiration for this approach, educational and research opportunities were emphasized. And in this regard, emphasis was laid on developing a thinking that would provide the general public an opportunity to see the historical and ancient heritage at the same time showcase nature in its beatific state through implementation of careful conservational programmes. In the year 1923, a programme of the government was set up by the Railway Board (South African Railways) as a trip to Lombald and its frontier Maputo region, which was already popular as a tourist attraction. The overnight stay program at Sabi Reserve was included in the itinerary. In this regard, Stevenson-Hamilton was able to convince the Commissioner of Railways that this program and similar excursion programs would increase the attractiveness of SAR. As expected, the first tourism program was successful and tourists were very contented with the program and thus Kruger National Park became popular as a tourist attraction.

On 16 September 1926, a board meeting of Kruger National Park was held and it was decided that tourism should be promoted so that the sources of income could increase. Emphasis was laid on construction of roads in the Park. It was decided to appoint a guide to come with the tourists visiting the Park and charge a fixed fee. There was also a fee for taking pictures. Literature related to the history of the Park was also made available for sale. In 1927, SAR worked with the board of Kruger National Park on a plan under which the development of the tourism industry, construction of roads in the Park, appointments of guides and safety issues, etc., were agreed upon. Independent traffic was banned. It was also decided to start SAR advertising campaign, catering services for the Park and SAR will give one percent of total revenue to the board. Thus the board of Kruger National Park opened the Pretoriaskop area to tourists. Tourists could travel to the area with a permit from the secretary of the board, but it was necessary for a tourists to return the same day. A revolver was permitted for personal safety. The arrangement of tourists to get permits from the secretary of the Park was very confusing, because of this, tourists often entered the Park from the Mountimba area without a permit. The provision of more facilities for tourists started in 1928.

Later on, a wooden and steel five-bedroom guesthouse (this guest house was formerly home to Ranger Tom Duke) in lower Sabi, was now opened for tourists. All the huts and guesthouses built in "Selby style". Paul Selby was an American engineer, served as a member of the park Board. They made a gap between the wall and the roof, forming the huts. A small hole formed just in the middle of the hut door. The purpose of pitched in the door was that if a dangerous animal is around the hut, it can be easily seen. These Selby huts were criticized because such huts used to get very cold in winter. These huts did not have windows, due to which it was dark and people in these huts felt uncomfortable as people peeped through the door holes. The access of mosquitoes to the huts built in this way was also very easy, and people stayed in these huts used to get upset and complain to the officials. From 1931 onwards, windows were arranged in all newly constructed huts. In the thirties there was great progress in facilities for tourists visiting the Kruger National Park. Construction of some huts on the banks of Crocodile River took place. In the same

year eight rondvelles were built on the Crocodile Bridge. The same year, tents were also used for the first time and each tent had four beds. These tents were initially planted in Skukuja and later in Satara. Apart from this, six other rest camps were also set up in the remaining camps.

In spite of all this, the situation is quite good today. Basic amenities such as providing hot water to tourists in all public facilities reflect better situation which was not available in the early days. The issue of hot water for bathing came up again in 1936 when such a facility was considered a luxury. This again led to differences among the officers and it was said that the board does not have the necessary funds to provide such facilities. Later an order was passed on the condition that the men would be entitled to use only hot and cold water, and the time was fixed for the women to use hot water for bathing. In 1935, various unions of the society of Pretoria and Johannesburg, demanded to the government to donate £50,000 (Rs. 100,000/-), in order to create more accommodation for tourists in Kruger National Park. In addition to this amount of 150 beds and some new development works, measures were to be taken to prevent mosquitoes in all existing huts. In this regard, the government approved an amount of £30,000 (Rs. 60,000/-). The board decided to spend Rs. 40,000/- for tourism development and Rs 20,000/- for water sources and sports activities. In 1938 it was decided to place an African caretaker in all picnic spots and to clean all the bushes and grasses in the area, and in 1939, park board decided that in tourist maps picnic spots sites will not be specified but cautionary signs must be put on the board. An entry fee of Rs. 2/- was levied for the entry of tourists in the Park and Rs. 10/- entry fee charged for heavy vehicle. A vehicle or pedestrians were also charged when they passed through the Pontoon Bridge. In 1943 Councilor Orpen requested the Park's board to set up a sub-committee of the board to control canteen services, camps, and tourism. In this regard, the board agreed to Orpen's proposal and a subcommittee was formed. This subcommittee decided to control all marketing and food preparation. It was also decided to appoint an officer for look after to all this. This officer would directly report to the secretary of the board in all matters. In 1948, the board appointed the first tourism manager, van der Veen. At the same time, the National Park Act of 1946 was amended to enable the Board of Kruger National Park to handle all types of business activities occurring in the Park. The Kruger National Park Panel finally took over the charge of all types of business doings in 1955. In November 1930, A. A. Scorch prepared the first list of rules for the Park's board.

At present, whatever rules and laws are being used by the board is based on the rules framed by Scorch. Laws for stay at night in the park, laws for driving time for tourists, laws for driving speed for tourist as of 25km per hour on the roads in the park etc. Damage to any object in the Park was a crime and the defaulter was penalized. However, from 1935 to 1946 the park board try to maintain and expansion of the remaining motorway setup. During 1938 park board decided to purchase machinery which was very useful to construct the various roads of the park. By the end of 1946, improvement in the area of repair and construction of roads was nil. A long wait had to be made for the repair and construction of roads in Kruger National Park and after about 20 years, in August 1965, the Nape Road fencing started between Pretoriuskop and Skukuja. Warden Steyn retired in April 1961 and

Mr. A. M. Brienard received the new charge of Nature Conservator. During the sixties there was also an increase in the number of tourists visiting the Park, during which the tourist infrastructure was also greatly improved. The first major camp, Oliphants, was opened in 1960 after many years of efforts. Meanwhile, more picnic spots were opened as well. The year of 1970 is known for the drought year in the history of Kruger National Park. This year, every river in the park - even the Sabi River which was filled with water throughout the year - dried up but fortunately there was abundant rainfall in 1971 and vegetation was revived throughout the park. Most of the rivers reached their flood level.

Conservation is as much about relating to people as it is about plants, animals, landscapes and soils and therefore by 1980, when Kruger National Park was facing large scale racial discrimination its officers needed to seriously investigate the racial oppression that guests from various race were facing. There was a consistently developing interest from other race, particularly blacks and Indians, to visit the Kruger National Park and extra charges had to be paid for such race for entry. Swaziland requested globally acknowledged guidelines of kindness. Likewise, humiliating circumstances began happening practically every day during top periods when visitors especially blacks and Indians were denied for the Park services by the “white” officers. In June 1981, the park's board decided that henceforth there would be no restriction in the park for people of all castes and ethnicities. Now the park's accommodation, canteen and office services would be available to all. In the late 1990s, in order to realize the dream of Greater Kruger Park, the boundary between Krueger National Park, Clasieri Game Reserve, Oliphants Game Reserve and Baileul Game Reserve was removed, thus establishing Greater Kruger Park Later, in 2002, Krueger National Park, Zimbabwe's Gonrezzo State Park, and Mozambique's Limpopo National Park were identified as symbols of peace and included in the Great Limpopo Trans frontier Park area.

In 2009, the Horticulture Authority setting up a hotel (Four Star) on the banks of Crocodile River, behind which the Horticulture Authority believed that the garden's dependence on state subsidies was reduced and consequently the hotel named Radisson Blu had a total of 104 rooms in 2019. Started with Earlier in 2018, the Skekuza Safari Lodge with a total of 128 rooms was opened. Keeping in view the facilities of tourists, a conference center was opened in 2011 which provides tourists with charter aircraft and tour bus services.

Today, the Park has more than 850 kilometers of coal tar roads, 1450 kilometers of stony thoroughfares and near about 4300km of fire brake roads. Since 01 December 2011, some changes have been made in the rules of travel for tourists in Kruger National Park such that travel will be allowed only if the tourist has an official pass or a letter of permission. Changes have also been made in the rules and fees for overnight stay in Kruger National Park. Visitors are advised to stay in their vehicles while driving around and Park their vehicles at the prescribed location. The doors of the vehicles are to be secured while walking around the Park. Vehicles are to ply within the speed limit mentioned in the manuals made by the Park authorities. While walking in the Park, the tourists are restricted from feeding or disturbing the animals, going against the laid rules is tantamount to serious offense. Tourists are also instructed not to remove any part of the body from the window.



And no tourists are allowed to roam in the “no-entry” sign area. In case the tourist(s) want to stay overnight at the Park, the check-in time at the Park’s rest huts is 4:00pm sharp, and the check-out time is 10:00am sharp otherwise extra charge is levied. Further, any type of noise is prohibited. Tourists can use their cell phones only in camps, entrances and only during emergencies. Kruger National Park is a malaria region and thus the board advises all tourists to follow their doctor’s instructions.

Game poaching continues at Kruger National Park. Often hunters come to hunt ivory tusks and rhinoceros horns. The Park authority has set up an anti-poaching unit in the Park and likewise the Rangers staff of the Park is always alert in duty. Since 2013, the Horticulture Authority has two drones and two aerospatial gazelle helicopters scouting the Park. Apart from this, automated movement sensors are also installed. A control center has been set up near the Mozambique border to control infiltration. The garden rangers have been provided with specially trained dogs to help catch the intruders at night. The National Anti-poaching Committee oversees all activities and coordinates with different institutions to deal with poachers.

The Park Authority and the government are sensitive to the basic character, ethos and environment of the Park. The Park was closed for the time being on 25 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 epidemic. It has reopened only to the local self-drive business on 08 June 2020. The government and the Horticulture Authority say that this situation will remain until the epidemic is over.

### **Conclusion**

The story of the hidden history and heritage of Kruger National Park began in 1898. The Park has taken a long journey from the establishment of the Park to being established as a National Park. Apart from the Government of South Africa, there is a long list of unexpected heroes in developing this Park. In 2002, the Kruger National Park (South Africa), Limpopo Park (Mozambique) and Gonrezzo National Park (Zimbabwe) combined to form these three parks and made Africa's largest game park. The Kruger National Park is one destination every enthusiastic tourist must visit in their lifetime as the Park itself is a grand historical safari and every area of the Park has a story to tell.

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