

Why the Garden Route is the businessman's ideal playground

By [Duane Stacey](#)

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Golf and mountain biking have become two favourite pastimes - especially for South African businessmen.

Even though golf has always been viewed as “the rich man’s game”, mountain biking is hot on its heels.

Recently there’s been a tremendous spike in mountain bike prices as the competitive spirit in riders seek something sleeker, something lighter but, most importantly, something faster to gain a competitive edge over their rivals.



Each gram shaved off the weight of a bike comes with an even more expensive price tag. So much so that one could argue mountain biking has become golf’s fiercest competitor for the businessman’s attention.

The Garden Route is a place synonymous with golf - some of the most neatly manicured courses in the country lie just a club’s length or two from each other and whilst the region’s golfing grandeur is undeniable, we were eager to discover what else was on offer.

Mountain bikes packed onto the back of our black never-say-die Ford Ranger FX4, we set out to explore the best spots on the Garden Route for the businessman to play.



Tsala Treetop Lodge

Nestled among the trees 10km from Plettenberg Bay and 22km from Knysna, [Tsala Treetop Lodge](#) is a magical place.

Encapsulated by an age-old indigenous forest, these treehouse hideaways are knitted together by an extensive network of walkways which guide their way through the lush greenery and extend to views over rolling valleys and distant hills on the horizon.

Mornings had us spoilt for choice. We started the day off with a coffee on the dining deck as we indulged in a fresh selection of croissants, cheeses, and fruits from the continental breakfast bar, before fuelling up for the day from the hot menu with a unique selection of gourmet egg dishes.



Tsala proved to be one of the best locations to base ourselves for the first few days of riding, with a choice of trails in almost any direction. We were able to ride from the lodge and be on a mountain bike trail within minutes.

The Harkerville red route, now reopened after fires had decimated much of this coastline and trail in 2017, is once again in

splendid condition and takes riders through lush forest single track, along rocky paths that weave their way along coastal contours and provides spectacular views.

Those lucky enough might spot some humpback whales or even the infamous great white sharks from the safety of the high cliffs.

Not far from here is Cairnbrogie farm which boasts some fun coastal single-track and a great coffee stop. It is well worth incorporating this into a longer ride or taking the family for a leisurely morning out.

Back at the lodge after a long day on the saddle, we could think of nothing better than enjoying a few cold drinks as we retired to our private pool on the deck of our treehouse, gazing at the winter sun which gave way to some spectacular sunsets before the evening chill coaxed us back inside towards the warmth of a cosy fireplace to get ready for dinner.



The twists and turns of Tsala's boardwalk lead you to Zinzi restaurant for dinner where you can pick and choose to refuel for the next day's adventures. If the architecture and internal design do not blow you away, the vibrancy of both local and international flavours certainly will.

Kurland Hotel

For a change of scenery and some different riding experiences, we moved further along the Garden Route to be greeted by the old-world charm of [Kurland Hotel](#).

With lounges, libraries, studies, dining rooms and an honesty bar, you might be forgiven for thinking you have walked into a game of Cluedo.

However, this family-oriented establishment provides far more entertainment than the murder mystery board game.

We were excited to see a chain of mountain bikes upon arrival, an activity Kurland encourages from the doorstep of their hotel, and a good indication that we might find some more epic riding trails.



We weren't disappointed as we spent hours navigating our way through the forestry areas run by MTO Forestry. A favourite was a ride that takes you up to the mast, traversing steep and rocky terrain until you reach exquisite views which extend back towards Plettenberg Bay.

After covering many kilometres on our mountain bikes, we were grateful to have the opportunity to exchange our steeds for the four-wheeled motorised version (or quad bikes) to further explore the 700-hectare private estate.

Whilst our visit did not coincide with the polo season (December to April), as we ventured beyond the homely feel of the verandah and pool area, it was clear that perhaps another sport may capture the imagination of the holidaying businessman when the stables are full and the horses are eager to gallop.



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Whether it is golf, mountain biking or even polo that excites you most, be assured that the Garden Route caters for all. So if you are fortunate enough to have the same packing space our Ford Ranger provided, why not pack in all the toys and enjoy an active getaway delighting in the luxuries of a phenomenal coastline?

As the debate surges on, perhaps you can decide for yourself which sport has become the favourite for the businessman in need of some time away from the desk.