

Eat, shop, play in Knysna

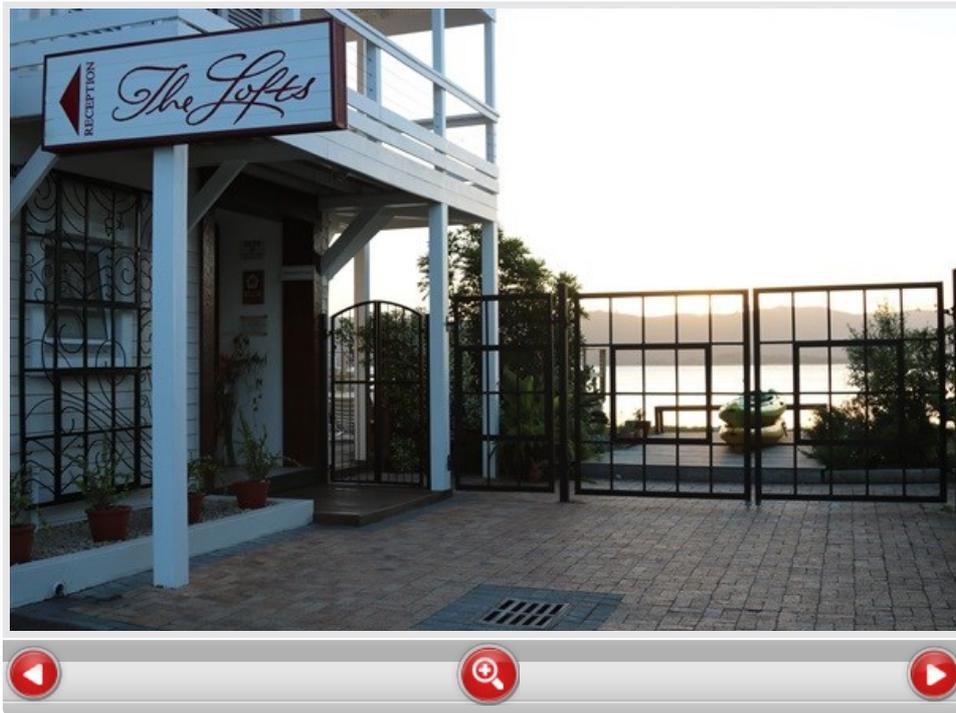
 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

29 Nov 2017

Somewhere about a one hour and 40-minute flight from Johannesburg and a five-hour drive from Cape Town is a place said to be one of the most beautiful parts of the world. A place that makes you feel lucky to be South African or to even just get a taste of this diverse country, its vast landscapes and feel its rich soil beneath your feet. Sadly, the Garden Route, Knysna in particular, was recently affected by a destructive wildfire, yet its beauty withstands and where the fire has swept its flames, there's something glorious in the aftermath - the new life this adversity has brought about.

So for a long-overdue mother-daughter weekend, my mom and I thought we'd meet halfway to spend some quality time... and where better than the seaside town of Knysna to do just that.

There's no place quite like it, where the land is separated by two mountains known as the 'Knysna Heads', creating a natural estuary where seahorses have made a home and in which there are two islands – Thesen Harbour Town and Leisure Island – bridged to the town centre, all surrounded by indigenous forests and cliffs with tucked-away beaches in between.



We chose [The Lofts Boutique Hotel](#) on Thesen to rest our weary traveller heads, as it seemed the most central and we had a list of places to go and things to do in the area. Although I knew it was close to Ile de Pain – an artisan café and bakery recommended by a friend who has a holiday home there – I didn't realise just how close. You don't even have to leave the building, which it turned out is actually the old Knysna boatbuilding shed; the original timber frames of which make the loft rooms especially unique. We stayed in a luxury two-bedroom, double story unit with self-catering facilities. It was spacious and tastefully decorated, with different styles to suit individual preferences.

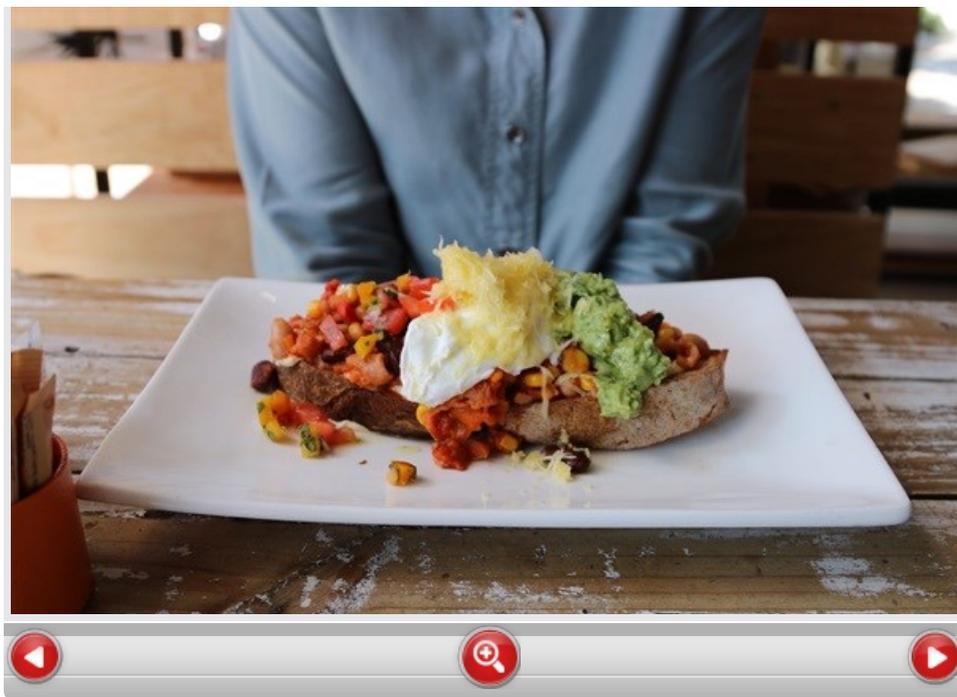
The atrium serves as the lounge and comes alive with activity and Cafe Del Mar-type music during the day and early evening. On the ground floor, one end has a plunge pool and spa overlooking the Blue Flag Marina, on the opposite end is Ile de Pain and on the side are some local shops that sell everything from artisan furniture, rugs and homeware to organic products. You really don't need to step outside, but there's so much more, you couldn't not...



Tired from our travels but having worked up an appetite, we thought we'd take a short walk over the bridge to [Freshline Fisheries](#), which I had been told had the freshest fish in town. The restaurant is rustic in the harbour's backyard, but surprisingly well-kept. We went with the recommended baby kingklip on the bone, accompanied by a glass of white. It was too good to have even a hint of food envy as other good-looking plates caught the corner of my eye as well as a subtle reminder that we had officially arrived at the seaside. Happiness.



Saturday morning, we woke up early to go to the [Wild Oats Community Farmers Market](#) in Sedgefield, Knysna's neighbouring town. We were so impressed by the quality of the produce and fresh, local ingredients, and the traders were authentically friendly and had all the time in the world to answer our many questions. We filled our basket with Le-Jar-Din's sauerkraut, Connie's pecan and date rusks, Tehillah Farm's kombucha, and caught up in it all, regret not stocking up on some black and Himalayan sea salt soaps. If I were a local or didn't have far to travel, I would have had a field day, but it was still worthwhile just experiencing this local Saturday morning ritual, to meet and support some of the farm community in a small way and take home a few keepsakes.



With the day still ahead of us, we headed back to town to have breakfast at [Ile de Pain](#). We would have eaten at the market, as there were so many options, but Ile de Pain is closed on Sundays, so we had no option really. We had the Mexican toast and brioche French toast, with a few baked things to go, and we may have gone back for a takeaway lunch. It's that good, and my face says it all...



Our very satisfied tummies called for a walkabout and some shopping. I loved [Sybaris](#) for its curation of home décor pieces, [Two on Toast](#) is also a lovely shop, and I was glad that I was lured into [Madam Botany](#) by the freshly picked peonies at the entrance.



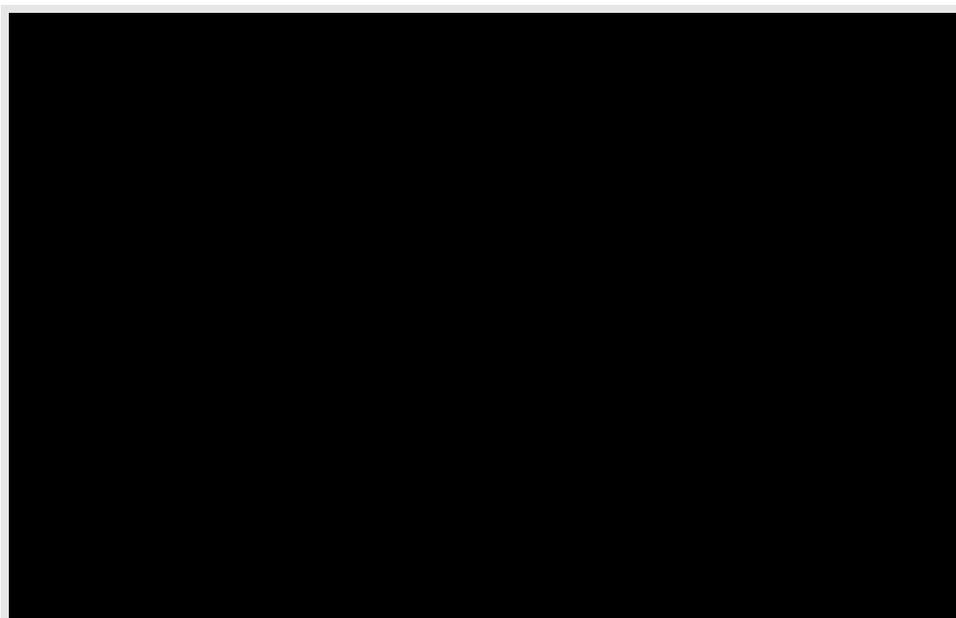
Although it's a little too late in the whale season, we were hopeful when we went for our midday whale watching boat ride with [Ocean Odyssey](#). Our eyes started seeing things after a while as seals started to look like sharks, but towards the end, we were spoiled with a close-up Bryde's whale sighting and an unscripted dolphin show. As an aside, our tour guide was invited to a braai later in the afternoon via a passing yacht as we approached the dock. I loved that, as it spoke to how close-knit and open this community is. On our return, we were welcomed back with warm refresher towels and had never been more ready for an afternoon nap.

Literally a few skips back to the hotel (across the parking lot), we spent the rest of the afternoon lazing around there, and I went for a short run to the waterfront and back before getting ready for dinner at [The Turbine Boutique Hotel and Spa's Island Café](#) – this boutique hotel is also a popular place to stay, and just a few metres away from The Lofts. It's actually a renovated power station, with its chimneys the landmark of Thesen and restored machinery the key focal points, so we needed an excuse to go there, and food is always a great one.



Unique accommodation with Knysna hotel The Turbine

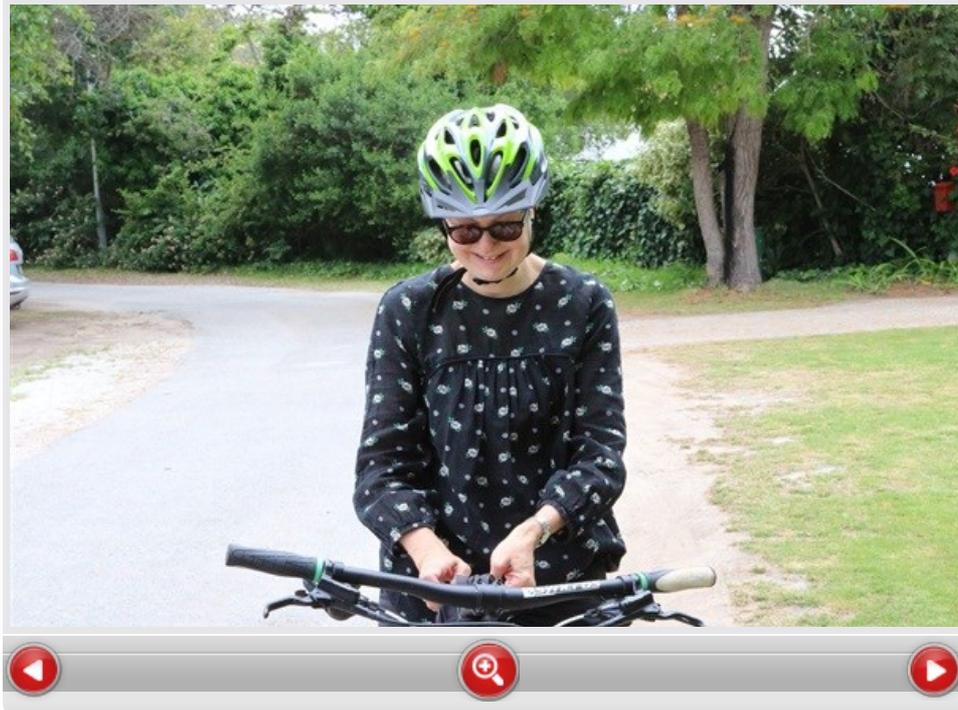
Ruth Cooper 29 Mar 2017





Sunday at Leisure

Sundays are for rest and leisure, and Knysna reminds you of this. So after a wholesome breakfast at the hotel, we went for a bike ride around Leisure Island with Mandy from [Hike & Bike](#). We met up at the island's one and only coffee shop, from where we took off on a little adventure with our baskets thoughtfully stocked with water and an energy bar. She taught us so much about the town that we still had no idea about, everything from its history to a crane called Bruce and her experience of the fires. It was time well spent, and we burnt a few calories...



Perfect timing, as we had lunch booked at [East Head Café](#). It was a great option to book ahead as it seemed everyone had the same idea. The view from our table of the 'west' head, if I can call it that, was worth it and we hadn't even ordered anything yet. We had the catch of the day, grilled kingklip and the hake and calamari combo. There's no better place to eat fish than on the water's edge.



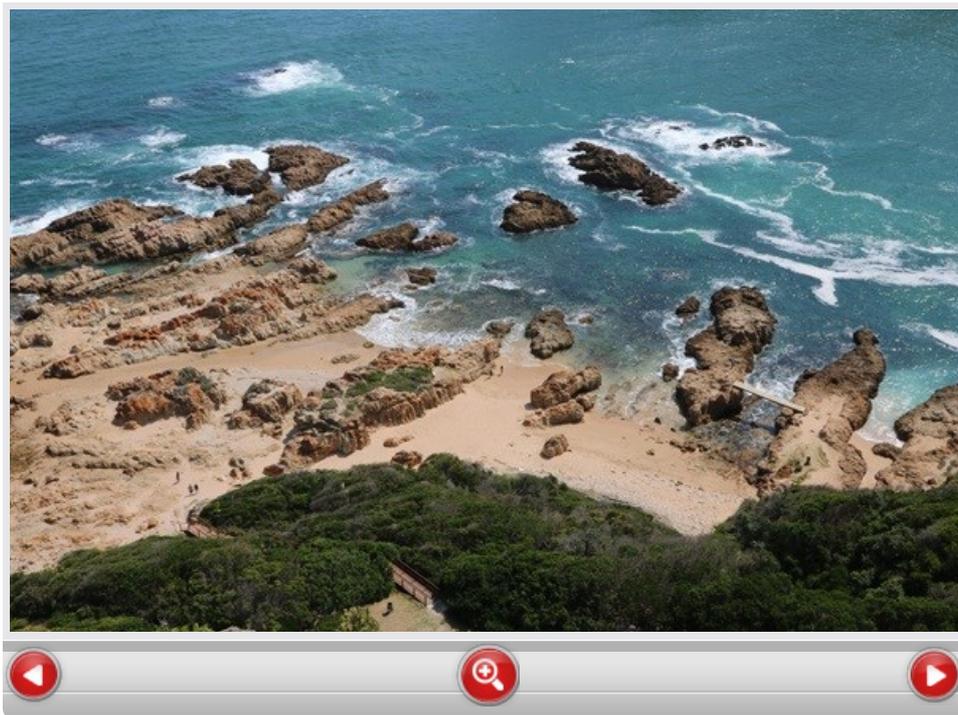
Five ways to explore Knysna

Ruth Cooper 28 Mar 2017





It was almost time to head back home to our husbands who so graciously allowed us this special time, but first, I needed to see what was around the corner and feel the sand between my toes, so we took a short drive over the mountain to Coney Beach. The perfect ending to a perfect little weekend-holiday.



Our stay was kindly sponsored by [Knysna Tourism](#).

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

- Jess is Senior Editor: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com. She is also a contributing writer. marketingnews@bizcommunity.com
- Cassandra Twala on this year's Sanlam Handmade Contemporary Fair - 21 Sep 2018
 - Hemelhujs x So Yum = a taste of Cape Town's most divine - 8 Aug 2018
 - A conscious conversation with Roberta Thatcher of La Mano and The Pantry Market - 27 Jul 2018
 - Ultimate romance at Emily Moon River Lodge - 15 Jun 2018
 - Eat, shop, play in Knysna - 29 Nov 2017

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>