

Scintillating Cederberg

Explore South Africa hit the high road recently, putting the brand new Mitsubishi Pajero Sport through her paces en route to sampling some of the finest offerings the awe-inspiring Cederberg

Departing from Cape Town we headed towards Ceres on the N1, with the wonders of the Cederberg awaiting us. On the open road the Pajero Sport has a perfect balance of power and performance, with the 2.5 litre turbo diesel cruising at the 120km/h on the highway, barely breaking into a sweat. The engine is one of the most refined 2.5 litre power-plants going, taking a lot of their expertise from winning multiple Dakar Rallies and putting it into their consumer offerings.

From Ceres you can take two different routes to get into the heart of the Cederberg, either the longer way around on the Calvinia road before taking a left along beautiful mountain passes to reach our eventual destination at the beautiful Kagga Kamma Nature Reserve, set deep into a rocky mountain range.

Alternatively you can take the R303 from Ceres past the picturesque backwater town of Op-die-Berg onto a twisting gravel road that swirls its way up the Koue Bokkeveld mountain range. Once the Pajero hit gravel roads you could immediately see why this thoroughbred was able to dominate the international rally scene. Cornering on gravel is seamless in 4x4 mode and quite frankly it never put a foot wrong.

In 4x2 mode it is a slightly tastier affair with a trigger happy tail end that excites with the traction control off. With the traction control on the Pajero sadly turns into an overbearing mother-in-law, cutting off the power at the mere hint of a tail slide. She is a little top heavy through tight bends too, although that is to be expected due to the sizable ground clearance and overall weight.

As we approach Kagga Kamma the landscape changes from arid bushveld, to a rocky oasis that is a sight to behold. It is little wonder that Bushmen used to draw vivid paintings on the massive boulders. Some of the finest Bushman paintings are on display at this eco friendly four star getaway, which is completely off the grid, boasting one of the largest solar farms in South Africa – more than enough for the entire reserve to run on, and then some.

On arrival we were greeted by the friendly rangers at Kagga Kamma and proceeded to accept their offer of a game drive and glass of bubbly. Ranger Arie knew his stuff and looks like the next 'camel man' in the making. We were treated to a majestic Cederberg sunset, which went down like a house on fire thanks to the fine finger snacks that were prepared.

If you choose to bring your own 4x4 there are a multitude of trails from easy to downright suicidal that can test man and machine, with options to camp overnight if you want to tackle the 100km 4x4 track. On more serious off-roading conditions the Pajero really shines and shows real quality in the build. For under 500k you'll struggle to find a better, tougher go-anywhere 4x4. The only other 4x4 in this segment of the conversation is the tried and tested Toyota Fortuner.





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OFFROAD ADVENTURE



The clearance on the Pajero is more than adequate and did not look that much lower than the rangers' Land Cruiser – which is benchmark for go-anywhere off-roaders.

To explore more of the single track action at the reserve, together with a fascinating tour of some of the hard to reach bushman paintings, Ranger Arie and I set-off on quad bikes on a 20km single track. It did not take long to get up to speed and we had the four-wheelers singing over the dunes and tight twists and turns. We were making such good time that we did the two hour trail in one hour – a mere 20 minutes off the 'lap record' as I found out at the pub later that night.

The quad bike track took in some of the best bushman paintings, depicting life hundreds of years ago. Paintings of large buck and traditional ceremonies were common. With the arrival of the white settlers, the painting changed, becoming more simple and less detailed as the lives of the Bushmen changed forever.

After a hard day in the saddle a swim in one of Kagga Kamma's two idyllic pools is a

must. The big pool is set right next to a large boulder which makes for a perfect unofficial diving board. It's a great place for family and friends to relax in the hot Cederberg sun to work up an appetite for a delicious dinner.

The food at Kagga Kamma is off the chart, and some of the best four star dining that I have seen all year. The game meat is fresh and tender, served with purpose.

The chef is a real perfectionist and puts a lot of effort into keeping his punters happy with carefully crafted offerings.

Dinner is served outside on nice evenings, with the fire going it is a fantastic place for couples to reconnect after the stresses of city life.

The cave-like luxury accommodation is eye-catching and makes one feel as if you are actually sleeping inside the mountain.

And then you wake up to breathtaking sunrise views of the nearby mountain range and 800m deep gauge that runs along the side of the reserve – which used to be a commercial sheep farm before the current owners saw the tourism potential.



For a spot of pampering, Kagga Kamma boasts a welcoming wellness centre, with various beauty therapies on offer.

Our photographers personally recommended the full body massage after a strenuous day behind the lens.

If you have still got a bit of energy left you can tackle one of the many hikes and mountain bike trails in the area, or take in a spot of star gazing on clear, wind-free nights.

This is really is 'big sky' country, and in winter one can see forever it would seem.

All in all Kagga Kamma offers a fabulous getaway, with the mix of nature, activities and fine dining – you really can't go wrong.

If you have got a few more days to spare in the area, take a meander to the highly rated Bushmans Kloof Reserve.

Rated as one of the top resorts in Africa it mixes the raw beauty of the Cederberg with five star accommodation and dining.

Condé Nast Traveler (USA) Readers' Travel Awards voted it as the number one resort/safari camp in Africa. As custodians of over 130 Bushman rock art sites, Bushmans Kloof

is recognised as a South African National Heritage Site, positioned within the Cape Floral Kingdom, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Tributaries of the Olifants River system flow through the reserve, cutting through the sandstone and creating crystal-clear pools, where you can enjoy the calm waters and ancient rock formations under the African sky. Meanwhile, Bushmans Kloof protects one of the largest private herds of Cape Mountain Zebra in the world, an animal saved from the brink of extinction.

At less than four hours from Cape Town the Cederberg really does offer a lot, and something different from the well travelled Garden Route that often hogs the headlines. The Pajero Sport did not put a foot wrong the entire trip and is one of the leading reasonably priced serious SUVs on the market.

It should really start enjoying better sales figures in South Africa, a country that shares its rugged appeal.

Gregory Simpson
Photos: Ian Goodes



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