

PILGRIM'S REST	Population:	Altitude: 1 321m/ 4334ft	Panorama Region
		Rainfall:	

On route R533 (Robbers Pass) approximately 27km west from the R36 to Lydenburg and Ohrigstad and 10km east from Graskop.

Origin

- There are a number of explanations for the origin of the town, but most give credit belongs to **Alec 'Wheelbarrow' Patterson**.
 - Patterson used to convey all his worldly possessions in a wheelbarrow, hence the nickname.
 - According to him “it was cheaper than a horse” and “that it won’t die of horse-sickness”.

When the diggings at Mac Mac had become too crowded for him, Patterson set out to do his own thing.

 - Patterson was a loner who is said to have left the diggings at Mac-Mac because they had become too crowded for him.
 - In 1873, he started panning in the valley where he discovered rich gold deposits in a stream that is now known as Pilgrim’s Creek, a tributary close to its confluences with the Blyde River.
 - He tried to keep the secret as long as possible, but was soon joined by William Trafford who saw Patterson working in the creek.
 - The news then spread and within two years more than 1 500 diggers were panning away in the stream, some from as far field as Australia and even California.
 - That was then the beginning of the first major Gold rush in South Africa.
 - Gradually the tents were replaced by wooden frames covered with corrugated iron and a few stone buildings.
 - On 22 September 1873 Pilgrim's Rest was officially declared a gold field.
 - By the end of that year about 21 stores, 18 canteens and three bakeries and Printing office with its own newspaper, the Gold News, started by an Irishman M.Y Phelan and later renamed the Gold Fields Mercury were running businesses.
 - Most of the gold was found in the middle section of the stream and soon the ones panning in lower reaches ran out of water. Some people started making a living by digging channels to divert water from other streams to these claims.
 - Individual claims were about 50 metres square.
 - Some large nuggets were found in the first few years:
 - **“Lilley”**(119 ounces and approximately \$45 000 at today's prices)
 - **“Bread”** (214 ounces worth about \$82 000).
 - **Another nugget (276 ounces)** was bought by Henry Glynn from Sabie for £750 (today’s price about \$100000).
 - In 1876, the decline in the gold diggings began.
 - The entire surface alluvial gold was picked and more heavy equipment started to be required to reach the deeper reef gold.

The Transvaal Gold Mining Estate

- Small companies were formed to raise the necessary capital, but the miners rather chose to leave town and seek their luck somewhere else.
- Eventually these companies amalgamated to form the **Transvaal Gold Mining Estates**.
- **David Benjamin**, a London financier, became the chairman.
- The company opened several mines that were profitable for about 50 years: Theta, Clewer, Ponies Krantz, Beta and Jubilee were amongst them.
- **Theta** was the most productive, delivering 5 million ounces during this period.
- When the mines started to close, the company focused on developing pine and bluegum plantations.
- In 1972, gold mining finally stopped, but a few lone prospectors remained to work in the streams.
- Currently, the whole village of **Pilgrim's Rest** has been proclaimed a **national monument** in its entirety.
- **No individual can own property in the village.**

Name

A few theories exist:

- **"Wheelbarrow' Patterson"** welcomed every new digger with the words, "*Here comes another pilgrim to his rest*".
- **William Trafford** who, upon seeing the riches in his pan, exclaimed, "*The pilgrim is at rest*".
- That Fred Cope, from Devon in England, actually made the first discovery (not Patterson) and that the diggings were named for an **Australian called Pilgrim**.

Claims to Fame

- Pilgrim's Rest **received electricity before the city of London**. With the demand to process the gold bearing rock at the Reduction Works, electricity was needed and Pilgrim's rest became the second town (after Kimberley) in South Africa to receive this luxury.
- **Jock of the Bushveld's** owner, Transport Rider **Percy Fritzpatrick**, worked in the area during the late 1800's. One of the memorial stone markers to Jock can be found in the Caravan Park. Jock memorials can be found throughout Mpumalanga and Kruger Park indicating the route taken by transport riders to Delagoa Bay.
- **The South African Gold Panning Championships** annually takes place here in September. Events over four days includes the following:
 - **"The Wheelbarrow Patterson Race"**: Teams races from the Lower to the Upper town with terrified passengers clutching the edges of the wobbling wheelbarrows.
 - **Panning for gold Championships** (open to anyone) and you get to take home all the gold you discover in your pan.

- **“The Digger’s Dance”** is held on the final night with “sakkie-sakkie” the Lowveld way and men in “vellies”.
- **The 2005 World Gold Panning Championships** was held here.

Historical sites and monuments

- **The Whole Village of Pilgrims Rest is a National Monument.**
- **No individual are allowed to own any of these properties in the village.**
- Hosts more than 73 buildings, home museums, memorials, art and craft shops, coffee shops and restaurants and an information centre.

Royal Hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interior decorations are nearly all authentic and include many relics from the past. - Still operates as a hotel and offers overnight accommodation.
Leadley’s Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Built in 1883. - Currently serves as an annex to the Royal Hotel. - Recorded actually as the very first hotel to be built in Pilgrim’s Rest.
Dredzen Shop and House Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The shop keeper and his family used to live at the back of the shop and the rooms and furniture have been kept much as they were.
Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Robber’s grave: The most peculiar grave in the cemetery belongs to a nineteenth-century tent robber who was caught in the act and was subsequently shot and buried on the spot. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ His grave lies north-south to brand him as a thief forever. ○ Only 163 of the 320 graves in the cemetery have headstones. ○ The oldest grave is that of Bazett Jervis Blenkins, who died on 12 June 1874 after being crushed by a large boulder on his claim. ○ Other deaths were caused by drowning, snake bites, pneumonia and dysentery, especially among children.
Miner’s House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Built in 1913 in the typical style of the 1910 -1920 period - Built for a Dr Seycombe.
Old Post Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is still standing and operating to post letters and postcards.
Printing Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The building used to house the offices of the Pilgrim’s Rest and Sabie News, the local newspapers. - Exhibits the historic front pages of local publications.

PILGRIM'S REST Continue..	Historical sites and monuments	Panorama Region
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War Memorial and Oak Tree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Located opposite the Printing Museum. - Erected in commemoration of the men from Pilgrim's Rest and surrounding area, who fought and died during the two World wars. - The Oak tree next to the memorial was grown from an acorn from Delville Wood.
Town Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It was once the centre of social life in the town. - Frequent used by the ladies of the local Anglican Church who held their church functions here.
Four Church Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four buildings have survived the time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o St Mary's Anglican, built in 1884 o Sacred Heart Roman Catholic. o Methodist. o Dutch Reformed.
Central Reduction Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Built in 1895 by the Transvaal Gold Mine Explorations: It includes old mule stables, blacksmith's, carpenter's and wheelwright's shops together with tools and paraphernalia.
Diggins Site Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Displays the lifestyle of the first gold diggers and explains the process of gold-panning.
Jobber's Bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is a five arched stone bridge built in 1896. - Stretches over the Blyde River at the northern end of the village.
Alanglade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is the stately former residence of the Manager of the Pilgrim's Rest Gold Mine. - Located just a few kilometres outside the village and is still in pristine condition. - Was occupied by a succession of mine managers until 1972, when the mine finally closed down.
Robbers Pass (R533)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Links Pilgrim's rest with the Lydenburg-Ohrighstad road. - The Zeederberg coaches transported mail and passengers, as well as gold bullions from the mining company and commercial banks to Lydenburg. - According to the history of Pilgrim's Rest the coach was robbed twice in at the summit of Pilgrim's Hill. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The first robbery recorded during 1899 was successful, with two masked highwaymen making their escape with gold with the value of 10 000 pound at that stage. o They were never found.

- The second robbery was recorded in 1912.
- It was done by a well-known character of Pilgrim's Rest that was badly in debt.
- He attempted a robbery at the place of the firs.
- Tommy Dennison found only a case of silver coins instead of gold sovereigns.
- He was arrested at the Royal Hotel Pub while he was paying his debt in half crowns and also because he rode his own recognizable horse during the robbery.
- He returned to Pilgrim's Rest after a 5 year prison term to open the "Highman's Garage".

Activities and Attractions

Various
Nature
Reserves
Located
along the
R36
and
R533

- Ohrigstad Dam and Crystal Springs on the banks of the Crystal Spring River.
- Mount Sheba Nature Reserve: (450 ha)
 - Privately-owned nature reserve
 - Protects one of the few remaining large tracts of indigenous forest in the Mpumalanga Drakensberg area.
 - These forests boast 110 species of trees including fine specimens of real and Outeniqua yellowwood and ironwood trees (some 1 500 years old) as well as Cape chestnut, cabbage and red-pear trees.
 - It harbour more than 1 000 species of plants, that including more than 60 species of ferns and many types of orchids and moss.
 - Offers luxury accommodation, good food.
 - Boasts a number of caves, some with long tunnels, near the old Jubilee mine, which overlooks the town.
 - Offers some sporting facilities such as The TGME Golf Club with a tricky nine-hole golf course.
 - Other activities includes **the Prospector's Hiking Trail Network** which offers numerous hiking trail with various degrees of difficulty in the vicinity of the village and Ponieskrantz Stables which offers offer day or overnight horse-riding trails.

SABIE	Population:	Altitude: 1 035m/3 396ft Rainfall:	Panorama Region
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On route R537, approximately 47km north of White River.

On route R37, approximately 46km east from Lydenburg over the Long Tom Pass.

Origin

- In 1844, the Bronkhorst brothers acquired the farm Grootfontein ('large spring').
- The village of Sabie was later laid out on the farm when gold was discovered.

The Discovery of gold

- In 1880, the big-game hunter, **H.T. Glynn**, bought the farm for £600.
- According the legend, Glynn were entertaining some friends on a picnic at the Little Sabie Falls in 1895. Later on, they engaged in some target shooting, aiming at empty bottles placed on a ledge. The rock behind the bottles was chipped and traces of gold could be seen. Of course, this was the end of the party, with everyone starting to prospect in the hills.
- **Captain Ingle**, one of the guests, worked more systematically and discovered a comparatively rich reef in the area.
- **The Glynn's Lydenburg Gold Mining Company** immediately commenced with mining and production only ceased in 1960.
- 124 million ounces of gold (worth nearly \$500 million at today's prices), were extracted over a period of 65 years.

The birth of a town

- Sabie grew from the mine.
- In 1913, the branch railway from Nelspruit to Graskop reached the village.
- In 1924, municipal status was granted in 1924.
- H.T. Glynn, also known as the '**Squire of Sabie**', became the first mayor.

Plantations

- Pit props were required to support the tunnels in the gold mines, and initially the indigenous hardwood trees, growing on the slopes, were cut by private woodcutters for this purpose.
- Several water-driven sawmills were built.
- Soon, the indigenous trees have almost all been cut down, forcing the gold mines in the area to plant their own plantations.
- In 1903, similar plantations west of the escarpment were initiated by the government.
- In 1920, a forestry office was opened in Sabie.
- Pine and bluegum plantations have brought new prosperity to the town, after the gold mining ceased.
- The plantations around Sabie are reputedly among the largest man-made forests in the world.

SABIE	Name	Panorama Region
Continue...		

Name

- Derived from the Shangaan “**uluSaba**”, meaning “fearful”.

Claims to fame

Mondi
Timber
Mill

- The largest timber mill in the Southern Hemisphere and is close to town.

Agriculture

- The economy currently is largely supported by its flourishing timber industry. The South African Forestry Company (**SAFCOL**), the custodian of many of the forests in the area, has gone to great lengths to ensure a fine balance between the utilisation and conservation of these beautiful tracts of land and has established a network of hiking and horse-riding trails through the forests.

Mining and industries

South
African
Forestry
Company
(SAFCOL)

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Historical sites and monuments

Anglican
Church

- Designed by the famous architect, Herbert Baker.

Sabie
Forestry
Museum

- The only one in South Africa that exhibits the details of the uses of different types of wood.
- It also displays the history of the South African timber industry and these of the people who have made this industry their livelihood.
- The musical qualities of wood are also explained and a “**talking tree**” tells of the evolution of a tree.

Attractions and activities

Various Hiking Trails

- **Safcol Fanie Botha network of trails (5 trails):**
- These trails meander through the Ceylon Plantation near Sabie, passing waterfalls, crossing streams and climbing rocky cliffs.
 - o Bonnet/Mac-Mac Pools Trail: (two-days)
 - o Maritzbos Falls Trail: (three-days).
 - o Fanie Botha Trail: (five-days).
 - o Mount Moody Trails.
 - o Mac-Mac Trails: (two-days)
- Three easy day routes provide alternatives for those who prefer less strenuous hikes:
 - o Loerie Route through the Ceylon Plantation: (14-km).
 - o Sekretarisvoël, Route starting at the Mac-Mac Pools: (7-km).
 - o Forest Fall Route: (3-km).

Government Tree Breeding Station

- Located east of Sabie.
- The station uses crosspollination and experimental breeding methods to improve the quality of timber.

Various Waterfalls

- **Three waterfalls** are located on the same scenic forest track which turns off from route R532 to Graskop about 1km outside the town.
 - o This road is about 10km long and ends at a cul de sac road which gives access to the **Lone Creek Falls**, an 68-m high cascade of water with lovely rain-forest effect caused by the spray
 - o **Horseshoe Falls**
 - o **Bridal Veil Falls:** situated along the south bank of the Sabie River,
- **Mac-Mac Falls:** (56m high)
 - o Count as one of the most impressive waterfalls in this area.
 - o It is a twin waterfall which cascades down into a gorge with fern-covered rock walls.
 - o A digger's blast in 1873 changed the rock formations in such a way that the waterfall split in two.
 - o Called "Mac-Mac" by the then president of the Transvaal, President Burger.
 - o So many of the diggers at the time were Scotsmen that it seemed to Burger that every second digger was called "Mac".
 - o Below the falls and further down stream are the Mac-Mac Pools where visitors can have a safe swim and a picnic.
- **Sabie Waterfall**

Various
Scenic
Drives

- **Three circular routes on Route R532:**
- (Has been voted one of the ten most scenic day drives in South Africa.)
 - o **First Circular Route R532:** runs from Sabie, with its many beautiful waterfalls and forests down through the historic mining town of Pilgrim's Rest on the R533 over Robers Pass to join the R36 through Ohrigstad, pass the Echo Caves and joins the R532 again to Blyderiver Canyon down to Graskop.
 - o **Second Circular Route Route R532:** runs from Sabie down to Graskop with its Lowveld vistas, down Kowyn's Pass on route R533 round to the Swadini and Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve on route R40, up the Abel Erasmus Pass on route R531 and then joins the R532 to Graskop with its stunning views over the river gorge and on to Bourke's Potholes, the rainforest, Gods Window and the Pinnacle.
 - o **Third circular route on Route R532:** runs from Sabie, with its many beautiful waterfalls and forests down through the historic mining town of Pilgrim's Rest on the R533 over Robers Pass to join the R36 through to Lydenburg and return via R37 over the Long Tom Pass to Sabie.

Mauchsberg
andLong
Tom
Pass
(2 150m)

- Mauchsberg (2 211 m) and Mount Anderson (2 284 m) on the Drakensberg escarpment between Lydenburg and Sabie.

History of the Long Tom Pass

- Links Lydenburg on the Drakensberg plateau with Sabie on the escarpment
- It is one of the highest points reached by a major road.
- From Sabie the R37 climbs more than 1 000 m before descending 670 m to Lydenburg.
- On the Sabie side there are extensive forest plantations (pine and bluegum) while on the Lydenburg side the countryside is relatively bare.
- With the founding of Lydenburg in 1850, the Voortrekkers aim to establish a transport link with Lourenco Marques in Delagoa Bay, a port that was far removed from British control.
- The Indian Ocean was only 200 km away and soon transport riders found their own route, which became known as the ***hawepad*** ('port road').
- The main barrier to the sea was the Drakensberg.
- In 1871, at the behest of President T.F. Burgers, the Transvaal *Volksraad* (parliament) voted £3,000 for the construction of a road over the formidable obstacle.
- The contract was awarded to Abraham Espag and most of the work was done by pick and shovel.

SABIE

Attractions and activities

Panorama Region

Continue...

- The first wagons to use the road, which followed the route of the **old hawepad** in many places, arrived in Lydenburg from Delagoa Bay in 1874.
- The pass was opened on 22 July 1953.
- It was also christened at the same time to commemorate a famous skirmish between the Boers and British in September 1900.
- During the Anglo- Boer War the retreating Boers deployed two 155-mm Creusot artillery guns nicknamed “Long Toms”, in the pass, against the pursuing British forces, hence the name of the pass.
- A replica of one of these guns stands guard at a spot some distance from the summit of the pass.
- Parts of the old road are sign posted along the new pass, which was surfaced in 1964:
 - o **At Die Geut ('the gutter')**, also known as 'the staircase', ruts can be seen in the slate. These were scored by the locked wheels of the heavily laden wagons when they were brought sliding down the steep gradient.
 - o **Devil's Knuckles**
 - o **Whiskyspruit**, where the water was reputedly so good that it made an excellent drink regardless of the quality of the whisky
- **Blystaanhoogte** ('standing still height'), another very steep section where progress was so slow that the wagons seemed to be standing still.

Cycling
Route
(56km)

- Starts in Sabie to Lydenburg over the Long Tom Pass.
- Considered to be one of the ten most scenic cycling routes in South Africa.