POST001

Devonian Ecosystems Fieldtrip (fly to Gqeberha)

Fieldtrip leader: Rob Gess

Dates: 4 December to 9 December 2026 (5 nights, 6 days)

Approximate cost: R22 000 per person. Excludes flight costs

Minimum pax: 13 plus 3 facilitators

Maximum pax: 13

Rigour: A reasonable level of fitness is required. Daily walks over uneven terrain are expected. Walking shoes, sun protection, and basic outdoor gear are essential.

Tour includes: Accommodation, most meals as specified, transport during the field trip, field-trip manual, guided geological and palaeontological site visits.

Tour excludes: Flights to and from Gqeberha (Dawid Stuurman Airport), personal expenses, optional activities not listed. (early flights to Gqeberha and late flights from Gqeberha recommended)

Brief description and overview of the trip

This post-conference Devonian field trip offers an in-depth exploration of key geological and palaeontological sites in the Eastern Cape, focusing on the Cape Supergroup and associated Devonian successions. The excursion highlights sedimentary environments, fossil assemblages, and palaeoenvironmental changes recorded during the Early to Late Devonian from a high-latitude Gondwanan perspective.

Participants will examine classic sections of the upper Table Mountain Group, including the Baviaanskloof Formation, which documents the transition from fluvial to marine conditions

during the earliest Devonian. These sites preserve important evidence of early terrestrial floras as well as cold-water, endemic Malvinoxhosan invertebrate faunas.

The trip also covers exposures of the Bokkeveld Group, where well-preserved marine invertebrate fossils illustrate Devonian biodiversity within the Malvinoxhosan Realm. Significant fossil material encountered will be accessioned into recognised museum collections, reinforcing the scientific importance of the localities.

Later in the trip, attention shifts to the Late Devonian successions of the Makhanda region, including the internationally significant Waterloo Farm locality. This site has yielded tetrapod remains, diverse fish assemblages, and plant fossils from a marginal marine setting, providing rare insight into ecosystems close to the Devonian–Carboniferous transition.

In addition to scientific activities, the itinerary includes visits to Addo Elephant National Park and regional museums, offering cultural and natural context. The trip is designed for delegates with an interest in geology, palaeontology, and Earth history, combining academic depth with a well-paced travel and accommodation schedule.

DAY 1 – 4 December 2026 (Gqeberha / Oyster Bay)

10:00 - Morning pick-up at Gqeberha (Dawid Stuurman Airport) by Van Rensburg Tours. Travel to Oyster Bay (120 km). Evening at Oyster Bay Lodge with dinner and breakfast included. Distribution of field-trip manual and informal discussions.

DAY 2 – 5 December 2026 (Oyster Bay / Zungah Lodge)

Morning travel to Impofu Dam (20 km). Walk through a complete section of the Baviaanskloof Formation (uppermost Table Mountain Group), showing geological evidence for deepening of the Agulhas Basin during the earliest Devonian (Lochkovian to Pragian), from fluvial to marine.

Site of famous earliest Devonian floras from South Africa and early evidence for Malvinoxhosan cold-water endemic invertebrate fauna. No excavation or hammering permitted.

Packed lunch at the dam. Afternoon travel to Zungah Lodge (150 km). Evening braai (vegetarian option available). Self-catered breakfast provided.

DAY 3 – 6 December 2026 (Zungah Lodge / Addo area)

Visit to road quarry exposing Voorstehoek Formation (Ceres Subgroup, Bokkeveld Group) – early Devonian (Eifelian). Typical marine invertebrates of the Malvinoxhosan realm.

Hammering permitted; significant fossils to be accessioned to the Albany Museum.

Lunch at the quarry.

Afternoon travel to accommodation in or near Addo National Park (100 km). Supper included.

DAY 4 – 7 December 2026 (Addo / Makhanda)

Morning drive through Addo Elephant National Park. home to the last locally endemic Cape elephants and Buffalo. Lunch stop at Nanaga (included).

Afternoon travel to African Safari Lodge near Makhanda (100 km).

Dinner included. Evening talk on Late Devonian (Frasnian – Famennian) palaeontology of the Makhanda region.

DAY 5 – 8 December 2026 (Makhanda area)

Tour of geological/palaeontological sites around Makhanda, including Howison's Poort and Waterloo Farm (40 km) site of most important high latitude Famennian marginal marine locality - from which tetrapod remains, diverse estuarine fish and plants have been recovered.

Late lunch of pies at Albany Museum's Devonian Ecosystems Project (in room where a South African diamond was first identified).

Viewing of Waterloo Farm fossil galleries and Devonian collections (requests to see specific specimens may be made in advance).

Option for guests to walk into historic town (if finished at gallery and collections) – including Possible visit to SAIAB gallery to see famous first Camoros coelacanth, more neatly dissected later specimen, and juvenile.

Return to African Safari Lodge (20 km)

Dinner (included)

DAY 6 – 9 December 2026 (Makhanda / Gqeberha)

Breakfast at African Safari Lodge. Travel time approximately 2 hours to Gqeberha.

Return transfer to Gqeberha for onward flights from Dawid Stuurman Airport. We plan to arrive around 12:00 at the airport for onward flights. We would encourage you to schedule late afternoon flights back to your home destination or onward flights.