

Saldanha

The name Saldanha Bay originally applied to the present Table Bay, where Antonio de Saldanha, a Portuguese admiral anchored his fleet in 1503. Ironically he never saw the bay that was named after him, since by some navigational error, the name Saldanha Bay was applied to its present position by Joris von Spilbergen. During the Second World War Saldanha Bay was very important because of its strategic location and safe anchorage as a convoy assembly point. Today Saldanha has a huge iron ore quay and is home to a large variety of fishing vessels.

Saldanha Bay is the largest natural bay in South Africa: it offers a paradise for water sport enthusiasts. Its sheltered harbour plays an important part in the huge Sishen-Saldanha iron ore project at which Saldanha Steel, a state of the art steel mill, takes centre stage.

The town is not only important for export but also hosts many other industries, for example, crayfish, fish, mussels, oysters, seaweed and many more.



Saldanha is also the location of the South African Military Academy as well as SAS SALDANHA, a naval training unit.

Things to see in Saldanha include the French Huguenot Memorial, Doc's Cave, the Breakwater and Cummings Grave. The breakwater was built in 1976 and is 1,8 km long. It connects the main land with Marcus Island. There are also hiking trails for the nature lover at Oranjevlei and at the SAS Saldanha Naval Base. Furthermore, boat trips to the islands in the bay, as well as fishing trips, can be organised (weather permitting).

OORLOGSVLEI

Oorlogsvlei is the information office situated in Saldanha in what used to be the lovely homestead build by Mr. Hendrick Schreuder. Oorlogsvlei has an interesting history.

Early in the previous century there was a fight between the Dutch and the Khoi-Khoi about the water in a dam nearby, hence the name Oorlogsvlei.



In 1863 the Confederate raider, the Alabama, sailed into the bay. Mr. Schreuder had two beautiful daughters who met some of the officers. They went to row a boat without their father's permission, which led to the officers receiving a good hiding with a "sjambok" from the father. In 1901, during the Anglo Boer War, a British Warship and three Boers exchanged fire in the bay, one of the rounds fired from the ship hit the haystack at Oorlogsvlei and killed one of the farm animals.

Saldanha's first school was also possibly in the yard of Oorlogsvlei.

Since then many people have lived on this old farm but at the moment the West Coast Peninsula Tourism Bureau and the West Coast Publicity Association operate from the old homestead.

DOC'S CAVE

Legend has it that there are two stories behind this name:

An Irish gentlemen lived in the cave round 1845, at the time when "White Gold" (Guano) was collected off the islands in the bay. He kept all sorts of oddities, which he sold to the men who came on the ships to collect the bird droppings. He called himself Doc because amongst the things he sold, was medicine and "medicine" (alcohol).

The other story is that an old medical doctor stayed in the cave, at the time of the great Quarantine. From the cave he treated the patients who arrived in small dinghies, who were banned from setting foot on land.

Between the 1870's and 1880's the Bay of Saldanha became a Quarantine Station. A ship carrying people with contagious diseases had to be removed as far and as fast as possible from Cape Town. The name of one of the first ships was the "*Celt*". What better place than the isolated and deserted harbour of Saldanha. At the southern horn of the bay, at Salamander, there was a large group of tents spread over the little headland, for the victims. Smallpox victims were regularly sent there and the graveyard at Salamander is proof of this. It was only after the Anglo Boer War that the bay was finally cleared of being a quarantine station.