



CARTOON
ADVENTURE

Tinker Bell goes on
a daring quest with
swash-buckling
pirates : P13

My Weekend

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Exploring the Chokka Trail

A coastal hike, with added luxuries

Esti Stewart

PICTURESQUE fishing villages, a rugged coastline, dune fields, a tidal river, protected fynbos, wetlands and a visit to one of South Africa's few private working harbours are just some of the ingredients that make up the Chokka Trail. This new 58km "slack-packing" trail meanders between Oyster Bay, Cape St Francis, Port St Francis and St Francis Bay.

Your luggage is transported between stops and all you are required to carry is a lunch pack and enough water for the day.

The four-day and three-night route gives you the best possible opportunity to see and experience just how beautiful the area is – on foot, at your own pace and with overnight accommodation at top-class accommodation establishments.

Hikers meet at the St Francis Links, where vehicles may be left in a secure area for the duration of the hike. They are then transported to Oyster Bay to do a warm-up walk to Thysbaai, an out-and-back route of up to 14km – or whatever distance takes your fancy.

Look out for whales and dolphins playing in the waves, and it is not uncommon to see the Cape clawless

otter between the rocks. If you are lucky you will also be able to spot ancient Khoi fishtraps, only visible during low tide. Oyster Bay is a hidden treasure, with one of the most unspoilt beaches in South Africa. It is hard to find a more relaxing view than the one from your overnight stop, Oyster Bay Beach Lodge.

On the second day the trail starts in

of human life more than 60 000 years ago.

The Sand River bridge marks the end of day two and where your host for the second night, the Cape St Francis Resort, will wait for you with some ice-cold refreshments. Here you may also spoil yourself with a well-earned massage at the in-house health centre before dinner at the Joe Fish Restaurant.

Day three starts at Mostertshoek, west of Cape St Francis, following footpaths on the Wild Side along the shoreline back to Cape St Francis. The hike takes you through parts of the coastal cradle of humankind, through a variety of fynbos and more middens.

A visit to the SANCCOB African Penguin

Rehabilitation Centre, adjacent to the 18th century Seal Point Lighthouse, is a must. This is followed by the highlight of the day, a calamari tasting at On the Harbour at Port St Francis, a privately owned working harbour. After the tasting you will again follow the shoreline, completing the 16km Two Harbours Walk that ends at the Heritage Eco Centre.

From the Granny's Pool you will be transported to Brisban B&B on the St Francis Bay canals and, weather permitting, enjoy a cruise.

Day four finishes the trail with an 11km walk from The Cove via the Kromme and Sand Rivers into St Francis Links, a world-class Jack Nicklaus golf estate. A network of secret trails awaits you in the coastal thicket at the Links, alive with birds and animals. The pathways wind through the forest and the wetlands, eventually bringing you to the road and fairways, and back to the clubhouse for your farewell lunch.

The Chokka Trail is fully catered and includes bed and breakfast, packed lunches and dinners, as well as the canal cruise and calamari tasting. For bookings, contact Esti on 073-825-0835 or info@chokkatrail.co.za and for rates and further information visit www.chokkatrail.co.za

The trail is closed from December 16 to January 7, and transport to and from the PE airport can be arranged.



FRESH CATCH: Calamari tasting at On the Harbour

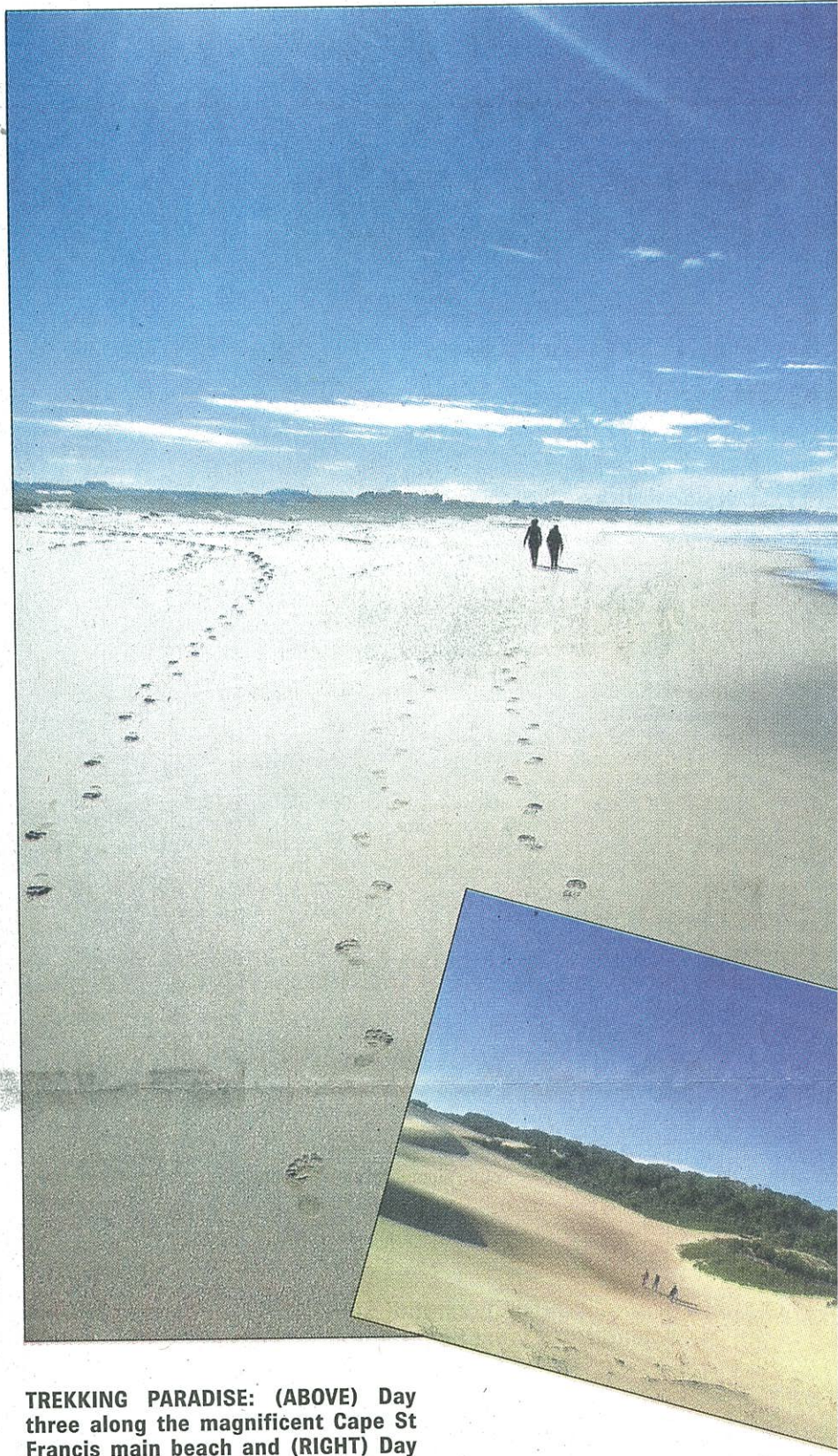
all earnest as you walk the length of the Sand River to St Francis Bay. The Sand River is a dune bypass system; a sea of rolling dunes as far as the eye can see and with a wonderful view of the Baviaanskloof mountains to the north.

At almost 18km, this is the longest section of the trail. The extent of the challenge will depend on weather conditions on the day, but the reward of knowing you walked where relatively few humans have set foot before is priceless.

You will pass shell middens, proof



HIDDEN TREASURE: Day one at Oyster Bay beach



TREKKING PARADISE: (ABOVE) Day three along the magnificent Cape St Francis main beach and (RIGHT) Day two negotiating the Sand River route