



McGregor Museum Kimberley

Archaeology Department: Public Archaeology and Archaeological Tourism



Growing numbers of visitors to archaeological sites in the Northern Cape shows a burgeoning interest. It is hoped that further sites will become accessible to the public, in ways that will benefit communities living near to the sites. An enormous responsibility rests with developers, that the integrity of each site is preserved; that the resource is sustainable in the long term. The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) has drafted [guidelines](#) for this: a landowner or developer of a site should have a management plan in place before opening a site to the public.

It is hoped that greater public awareness of the sites, and of the issues involved in their preservation, will help in conserving them for generations to come. Brian Fagan recently remarked that “an informed public of the future is the best advocate of all for archaeology.”

The following sites, all on the route north–westwards from Kimberley, through Barkly West, towards Kuruman, have facilities for visitors:

Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre

A spectacular rock engraving site on the outskirts of Kimberley, with new visitors' centre including displays, 25–minute introductory film, audio tour, board walk and community craft shop (the premier outlet for !Xun and Khwe San arts and crafts).

Nooitgedacht

Famed glacial pavements reflecting an Ice Age 300 million years ago, on which, in relatively recent times, perhaps 1000 years ago, Later Stone Age Khoe–San people made rock engravings. An old homestead to be restored and turned into a site museum.

Canteen Kopje and Barkly West Museum

Canteen Kopje is an early Acheulean site with huge quantities of artefacts including primitive handaxes and cores notably showing an early form of the prepared core technology. It was also the site of some of the earliest alluvial diamond diggings along the Vaal River. The nearby tollhouse was converted into a museum in 2000.

Wonderwerk Cave

A staggering 140 m-deep cave in the side of the Kuruman Hills, with evidence of human occupation reaching back more than a million years – given preliminary hints from new dating efforts. Here there is evidence of early use of fire and home-base behaviour; climate change reflected in the bones of small mammals found in ancient owl droppings; 10 000 year old rock engravings; more recent rock paintings on the cave walls...and much more.

A tour that takes in these sites could be rounded off with a visit to the Kuruman Moffat Mission – a site of early interaction between the first Christian missionaries and Mothibi's BaTswana. The mission has a library, a museum, and the original printing press ("segatisho") on which was printed the first SeTswana Old and New Testaments – the first time the Bible had been printed in its entirety in Africa and in a previously unwritten African language.

Information is provided on a number of other sites that we hope in future will be developed:

Tsantsabane (Blinkklipkop)

Near Postmasburg. Later Stone Age specularite mine dating back considerably before 800 AD, noted by early colonial travellers as "one of the most celebrated places", "a kind of Mecca" – it consists of a man-made cavern and underground tunnelling known to have extended at least 70 m into the ore deposits.

Taung

Kathu Pan

Driekopseiland