

MODJADJI NATURE RESERVE, GLM's JEWEL

Modjadji Nature Reserve, also known as the Modjadji Cycad Reserve, is situated near Duiwelskloof. The preserve has an area of around 350 hectares. The unique Modjadji Cycad Reserve is named after the successive rain-making queens who have inhabited the area since the 16th century, guarding the ancient cycads.

Close to Modjadjikloof, the 350-ha reserve features the world's largest concentration of a single-species cycad, also known as the 'Modjadji palm'. Once the main diet of the prehistoric mammal-like reptiles that lived here, the Modjadji cycad (*Encephalartos transvenosus*) forms a unique natural forest which can be viewed in its prehistoric state thanks to its strict protection by succeeding generations of modjadji ('rain queens'), the hereditary rulers in the area.

In fact, here, the visitor has the privilege of experiencing the 'Alice in Wonderland' atmosphere of the largest concentration of a single cycad species in the world. These protected plant species not only grow in profusion in the area, but are giants in the genus of 29 species, with specimens up to 13 m high, and bearing cones that may weigh up to 34 kg. December to February sees many of these strange plants in seed.

The setting is superb. When mist does not obscure the view, the visitor gazes over the cycad forest to the low veld and the Kruger National Park. Approximately 12 km of well-constructed walks drop from the cycad forest to the acacia and grass veld below where large game such as blue wildebeest, waterbuck, nyala, impala and bushbuck, and over 170 species of birds live.

The lands of the Modjadji tribe, a matriarchal society that has produced five rain queens, surround the reserve, and the traditional vernacular, architecture and culture seen on the reserve's periphery add interest to your visit.