"The" whale nursery of Southern Africa

"Seeing a whale for the first time, waving its massive tail at us, is a stunning experience. And witnessing one of the 15m creatures hurl itself clear of the water in a breach is amazing."
Bertil van Vugt, Tonight

It was the Southern Right Whales that put Witsand on the map, especially in the 90's, because San Sebastian Bay is considered the "Whale Nursery of South Africa". Investigating from a helicopter in October 1999, Dr. Best, a whale expert, confirmed a count of 233 whales in the Bay. On a good day, a whale watcher may observe up to 70 capering whales. At the beach restaurant there is a telescope on the roof, whalewatching platform that magnifies the whales up to 10 times. The platform is a perfect place from which to view the gentle giants of the sea and can accommodate about 90 people and there is plenty of parking. Whale-watching season starts in June and lasts until November each year.

{gallery}galleries/witsand/gallery4{/gallery} Each year these majestic mammals come to our shores between June and late November to mate and calf. Witsand enjoys the lion’s share of this visit due to the bay being the prime nursery for cow/calf pairs.

Southern Right Whales are the least understood of all the world’s great whales. Weighing up to 58 tons, and with the largest and most highly-evolved mammalian brains on earth, Southern Right Whales have inhabited the great southern oceans for about 60 million years.{gallery}galleries/witsand/gallery8{/gallery}

Migrating between their Antarctic summer feeding grounds and their mating and calving grounds off the coasts Africa, of Australia and South America, the Southern Rights are making a remarkable recovery from genocidal whaling last century and well into this century.{gallery}galleries/witsand/gallery5{/gallery}

They are now becoming the focus of intense scientific and tourist interest, and are set to play a major role in the global, multi-billion dollar whale-watching industry.{gallery}galleries/witsand/gallery6{/gallery}

In spring calving Southern Right whales cruise up and down the coastline, close to shore. St Sebastian Bay has the largest concentration of Southern Rights on the South African Coast. The official helicopter count done in October 2000 revealed 34 cow-calf pairs in the Bay, and 74 off de Hoop. On a good day you can see up to 50 Southern Right Whales. (Between May and December, boats should be wary of colliding with whales.)

Witsand is truely the home of the Southern Right Whale in Southern Africa. This peaceful coastal town is surrounded by two natural phenomena, the Breede River estuary and the Indian Ocean. The St Sebastian Bay houses the single largest winter migration population of Southern Right Whales. These gentle giants may either be viewed from the coast line at very close proximity.{gallery}galleries/witsand/gallery7{/gallery}

Article courtesy of Wistand Tourism Bureau.