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Jewel of the Karoo

Graaff-Reinet is the fifth oldest town in South Africa and is blessed with over 220 heritage sites ◆ more than any other town in South Africa! Graaff-Reinet has many magnificent examples of Cape Dutch architecture and has four extraordinary museums.

Rivers of Living Water

Surrounded by the Camdeboo National Park, Graaff-Reinet is the jewel of the Great Karoo. An oasis in a place of thirst. It is therefore an appropriate venue for an [Evangelists Conference](http://frontline.org.za/index.php?option=com_eventlist&view=details&id=28:evangelism-conference-graaff-reinet), as we are called to have rivers of living waters flow from our innermost being, in an often, dry and secular society.

Star Gazing

Graaff-Reinet is recognised as one of the best sites from which to observe the galaxies of stars above us without the interference that comes from built up areas.

Home of the Andrew Murray Family

The famous South African Missionary to the Voortrekkers, [Andrew Murray](http://frontline.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1278:andrew-murray-and-the-1860-revival&catid=20:africa-cat&Itemid=188), whose ministry was blessed with the most extraordinary Revival in South Africa's history, the 1860 Revival, was born and brought up in Graaff-Reinet, where his father was the pastor. Dr. David Livingstone described Graaff-Reinet as *"the prettiest town in Africa"*.

Republican Rebellions

Graaff-Reinet was founded by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1786. It was named after the governor of the Cape Colony, Cornelius Jacob Van der Graaff and his wife whose maiden name was Reinet. In 1795, the Burghers rebelled against the taxations of the VOC by expelling the Landdrost and proclaiming a Republic. The invasion of the British, when the Netherlands was taken by the French Revolutionaries prevented the Dutch governor from dealing decisively with this challenge.

Turbulent Times

In April 1799, Marthinus Prinsloo, the leader of the Republicans and 19 others were arrested and imprisoned in the Castle in Cape Town. There they were sentenced to death, but the sentences were not carried out and the prisoners were released, March 1803, when the Cape was handed back to the Netherlands. In 1801, there was another revolt in Graaff-Reinet.

Republican

Resistance

Not surprisingly a large number of the Voortrekkers came from Graaff-Reinet. Graaff-Reinet remains the cradle of Republican government in South Africa. The Cape Colony received a degree of independence in 1872 when Responsible Government was declared and in 1879, a railway line connecting Graaff Reinet to Port Elizabeth was completed.

Anglo Boer War

During the Second Anglo Boer War (1899 – 1902) Graaff-Reinet became a major centre of British military operations for the Eastern Cape. Nine Boers were sentenced to death and executed by firing squad in and around Graaff-Reinet. The Burgher monument in Donkin Street commemorates the fallen Boers.

Teacher Training Centre

Graaff-Reinet Teachers College was a major educational centre from 1906, until 1994.

Church

The Dutch Reformed Church in the town has similar architecture to Salisbury Cathedral and can seat over 1,500 congregants.

Geography

Graaff-Reinet lies at 2,460 feet (750m) above sea level and is built on the bank of the Sundays River, close to the Sneeuberger.

Agriculture

Graaff-Reinet has a flourishing market for agriculture, particularly noted for mohair, merino sheep and ostrich farming.

Famous Citizens from Graaff-Reinet

Some of the prominent citizens of Graaff-Reinet have included:

Andries Pretorius (1798-1853), the victor of the Battle of Blood River and the Great Trek leader after whom Pretoria was named.

Andries Hendrik Potgieter, the victor of the Battle of Vegkop and the Great Trek leader after whom Potgietersrus was named.

Gerrit Maritz, the Great Trek leader after whom Pietermaritzburg was partly named.

Martinus Wessels Pretorius (1819-1901), the Boer commando and statesman who became president of the South African Republic (1857-1871).

Andrew Murray Jnr. (1828-1917), the Christian Missionary, pastor and

author, who is most closely associated with the Revival of 1860. Andrew Murray stands out as the most prolific author in South Africa's history, with over 240 titles published. Well over two million copies of his books have been printed and sold over the years. Andrew Murray's books have been translated into more languages than those of any other South African author.

Famous South African businessman, **Anton Rupert** (1916-2006) was born and raised in Graaff-Reinet.

Numerous famous artists such as **Eben Leibbrandt** (1915-2007), and author **Hymme Weiss** (1910-2001), are also from Graaff-Reinet.

Many prominent sportsmen and famous Springbok Rugby players and Olympic sportsmen have also been born and raised in Graaff-Reinet.

Andrew Geddes Bain (1797-1864), who constructed 18 mountain passes, including Bains Kloof pass, Mitchells pass, Oubergs pass and Van Rynevelds pass, lived in Graaff-Reinet for over 3 years. His son, **Thomas Charles Bain** (1830-1893), constructed 24 mountain passes.

Professor **James Leonard Smith** (1897-1963), was the famous South African Ichthyologist, who first captured a coelacanth which had long been proclaimed extinct by evolutionists.

Dr. Sydney Rubidge (1887-1970), built and maintained a fossil museum which has been recognised as the finest private collection of Karoo fossils in the world.

Daniel Francois Malan (1874-1959), an ordained minister of the NGK and also a Prime Minister of South Africa served as minister in Graaff-Reinet between 1912 and 1915.

The fourth president of the South African Republic (1871-1877), **Thomas Francois Burghers** (1834-1881), was born and raised on a farm close to Graaff-Reinet.

Monumental

Graaff-Reinet is home to more national monuments than any other town or city in South Africa. The value of desolation, a geological phenomenon of weathered dolerite pillars is close to Graaff-Reinet. Graaff-Reinet is the fifth oldest town in South Africa, after Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Paarl and Swellendam.

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