

# MOON RIVER

When it comes to trails in inner city spaces, Pretoria has always been a little ahead of the pack. Andrew Steer tests its latest mountain-bike offering, Wolwespruit, in Erasmuskloof.

Photographs by Andrew Steer



**I HEADED** to Wolwespruit on a pleasant Highveld Sunday afternoon to try out its heralded wares first hand. It was easy to find and access, even for a confused Joburger. I'd read some positive reviews online, and the website is neatly done ([www.wolwespruit.co.za](http://www.wolwespruit.co.za)), but you just never know what to expect until you've actually been there and sampled it for yourself.

After a quick park-and-unpack, I headed to the registration, paid my 30 bucks, and sorted out my indemnity. I got an idea of the lay of the land from the manager on duty and headed out into the sunshine to burn off a little winter excess, and soak up some much-needed rays in the most enjoyable way.

## THE RIDING

The main (blue) trail through the park is 15km long, with around 300m of climbing. It is what would generally be considered an intermediate-level trail, while still being challenging enough to test even the hardest riders.

There are various options to shorten the loop, should you get tired, and 'chicken runs' (green) to skip some of the more technical sections, if they aren't

your cup of tea – so it caters for just about all levels of mountain bikers. Work is under way on a new beginner route and a pump track. By the time you read this, there should be something for everyone in the family.

From the start at the parking lot, the trail heads into singletrack that takes you alongside the highway, over several optional jumps and some north-shore-type bridges, and around a couple of sweet berms – all the while nipping in and out of small wooded sections. It's generally flat and fast until you hit a proper little leg-tester a few kilometres in, which quickly pops you atop a nice rocky koppie.

There you get a glorious view of the park to your left (and the intimidating-looking climb that looms later on in the lap), while just to your right you might notice the busiest freeway in Africa (how did that sneak in there?). A rapid downhill ensues, before more singletrack whips you around, taking you back in the direction of the starting point.

There is a bail-out route here (probably ideal for kiddies), or just follow the signs that take you out on a separate singletrack loop. This leads you over a

**1. Civilisation is always visible, but remarkably unnoticeable once you are riding. 2. Wolwekloof's signage is simple and effective.**

## NEED TO KNOW

**RIDING RATES**  
R30 for a single-rider entry; seasonal passes are not yet available.

**RESTAURANT**  
Someday Café serves anything from coffee with condensed milk to a braai broodjie or jaffle.

There's no set menu, just the chef's daily whims on offer, but you'll go home fulfilled in more than one way. Email [info@somedaycafe.co.za](mailto:info@somedaycafe.co.za)

**ADDRESS**  
501 Jochemus Street  
(cul de sac)  
Erasmuskloof  
Pretoria  
(next to Kloof Mediclinic)

wooden bridge to the other side of the Wolwespruit, which neatly bisects the park.

On this side of the spruit, a challenge is thrown into the mix in the form of a mini-Alpe d'Huez-style switchback climb that takes you off the linkage road, and up the formidable main slope. It is, however, at a reasonable gradient, and with a little determination it's possible to make it to the top in something resembling comfort.

Once there, you can enjoy the panoramic views back over the park, the hospital and the motorway (which you sometimes need reminding is even there).

The descent is challenging but great fun, and some tight turns will get the adrenaline going. There's something to be said for the experience of doing a white-knuckled descent with a hospital in full view...

Once back on the linkage road, you can either use this to head home, or tackle the last little challenge: a deceptively long jeep-track climb up along the park perimeter, which takes you back up to the main slope. You're rewarded, though, with a long and fast descent that has

fast, rocky sections, some tight, bermed switchbacks and even a couple of (black diamond) drop-off options. They're not as hectic as you might think; taken at a sensible speed, most people will be able to ride them.

The long descent again leads to the main linkage road, which, if you follow the signs, will take you back to the start via a bridge over the spruit, and along the bottom of the hospital grounds.

If you're up for more action, the main climbs could easily be tackled again off the main linkage road. Another full loop will make sure you've earned that post-ride boerie roll.

**OVERALL EXPERIENCE**

The trails on offer at Wolwespruit are great fun. The course is 95% singletrack and, although the length might be a bit short for fitter riders, the fun factor on offer means that doing two laps is a serious consideration.

There are plans to add some distance to the route (there are 90ha of land to play with) and some easier options for less technically minded riders, and for children.

A huge amount of work and passion has gone into building the specific routes – Charl Fischer and his team from Tool-Up Cycles have done a great job. Tons of singletrack have been cut, the whole area has been fenced and cleaned up, there are berms on many corners, bridges



where needed, north-shore-type obstacles, jumps – if you can't have a blast here on your bike, then you are definitely doing something wrong!

The trails still need a bit of riding in, and they could do with some rain, but with summer

approaching, the best of what the park has to offer is probably just around the corner.

Apart from extra distance, technical challenges will also be added throughout, with specific jump lines and possibly even a full enduro line.

Wolwespruit's facilities are still basic, but long-term plans include a full restaurant and bike shop, and ultimately setting up the park as a full-time venue that can cater for more activities. Being fully fenced and patrolled, it also offers safety in riding. I highly recommend the park: it's really enjoyable, but challenging too. And it's going to get better.

**CYCLING HOURS**

Saturday and Sunday from 7am to 6pm, with plans to open full time in the future.

**WEATHER**

Pretoria is always pretty hot, but with only small sections of the trail heavily exposed, and riders never too far from the starting point, a bottle of water/energy drink should keep you in decent shape.



**DIRECTIONS**

**From Johannesburg**  
Take the M1 north to Pretoria, staying with the M1 when it splits outside Centurion. Continue on the M1 until you take the Rigel Road off-ramp. Turn right onto Delmas Road, take the first left into Nossob Street, and first left into Jochemus Street.

The park entrance is at the end of the cul de sac. (The Kloof Mediclinic is well signposted from the off-ramp.)

**From Pretoria**

Take the Rigel Road off-ramp from the M1. Turn east onto Delmas Road, take the first left into Nossob Street, and first left into Jochemus Street.

The park entrance is at the end of the cul de sac. (The Kloof Mediclinic is well signposted from the off-ramp.)

**OTHER ATTRACTIONS**

- Trail running
- Walking (with dogs strictly on leashes)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**, contact Wolwespruit MTB and Trail Park, [info@wolwespruit.co.za](mailto:info@wolwespruit.co.za), Tel: 061-085-8120, [www.wolwespruit.co.za](http://www.wolwespruit.co.za), @Wolwespruit\_MTB, Wolwespruit Mountain Bike & Trail Park.