

THE TRADITIONAL GIANTS CUP HIKE

The Giants Cup Hiking Trail is part of the Drakensberg Park National Hiking Way. The hike is along a well established and clearly marked trail that runs southwards from Sani Pass in the north to Bushmans Nek in the south, the full trail being approximately 60km in length. It falls within the Ukhahlamba Wilderness Area (a World Heritage Site) and is administered by KZN Wildlife who provide 5 overnight huts along the route - at Pholela (Cobham valley), Mzimkhulwana, Winterhoek and Swimans (in the Drakensberg Gardens valley) and at Bushmans Nek.



View looking down into Drak Gradens

ACTIVE ESCAPES / SA ADVENTURE TRAILS: GIANTS LUXURY TRAIL

For less experienced and hardened hikers, who do not have the equipment or who are not prepared to carry a heavy pack with all their own food and gear for 5 days, a new concept in "luxury hiking" or "slack-packing" has recently been introduced by private operators. This aims at making the hike a more enjoyable experience people for people who would like to walk the trail during the day and stay at comfortable lodges at night where all their meals are provided for.

Services offered on this 3 day/ 3 night "luxury hiking trail" are:

- Professional Guiding and Back-Up Support
- 3 nights overnight Accommodation (private guest lodges)
- Full Catering Facilities (dinner, bed and breakfast and a packed lunch for 3 days)
- Luggage Transfer from Lodge to Lodge
- Pick Up from End Point of Hike.
- Safe Parking of Vehicles during the Hike

PRICE: R 2,500 pp (min grp size of 6 persons)

We offer a "luxury hiking" for the Giants Cup Trail (with all the above services) for **private parties of 6 to 10 hikers per group**. Departures are organized for the spring and autumn months when the weather is predictable and mostly fine - outside of the summer thunderstorms and cold winters. Groups are welcome to form their own parties or join one of the scheduled hikes planned for March to May, or September to November.



GIANTS CUP LUXURY TRAIL – HIKING ITINERARY

Day 1 (approx 13 km): After a restful night at Seaforth where you will gather for dinner the day before your hike, you will be transported to the start of the trail at the bottom of Sani Pass. The first objective is to cross the ridge between the Mkomazana and Gxalingwa valleys. Ngwenwa Pools is an ideal stop for lunch on a sunny day or, if it is raining, there is a cave a little further along the trail. After this the trail gradually ascends through attractive country into the Pholela valley, crossing a suspension bridge over the river to the Cobham reserve. You will be collected from this point for your transfer to Briar Lea farmhouse in the Cobham Valley where you will overnight.



Seaforth Lodge – First overnight



Ridge descent before Mkomazana



Sipongweni Ridge walking

Day 2 (17 km): This is the longest and most eventful day and you will need to make an early start to get the most out of it! You will be transported to the beginning of the day's walk at Cobham and continue the trail which ascends the Sipongweni Ridge past Tortoise Rocks before traversing its southern flank and dropping down into the Mzimkulwana valley. You will see the Mzimkulwana Hut (normally the 2nd nights hut on the GC Trail) nestling beside one of the tributaries of the Umzimkulu. A good spot along the way is bathplug cave, named after a hole in the cave floor through which disappears. Observe but do not touch the Bushman paintings on the cave walls.

Try and leave Mzimkulwana Hut after an early lunch in order to complete the remainder of the days hike which will first take you on a long climb towards Little Bamboo Mountain. On the top of the ridge you will find a number of small vleis (tarns) where blue cranes frequent and remains of petrified forests can still be found. The trail then continues down following a pleasant stream valley with tempting swimming pools, and finally reaches the tar road of the Drakensberg Gardens Valley where you will be picked up and taken to Orchid valley for the third night.



Orchid Valley Guest Lodge – 3rd overnight



Stunning views from Orchid Valley (Watsonia's in flower)

Black Eagles Pass – Day 3



Day 3 (13,5km): You will need to be guided out of Orchid Valley to pick up the marked Giants Cup Trail above Winterhoek Hut. The first half of the trail ascends the ridge to the west of Garden Castle mountain via the scenic but steep Black Eagle Pass. Be sure to fill your water bottle before you start as there is little surface water along this section of the trail. You eventually reach an altitude of about 1900 metres between the two river valleys of the Mzimkulu and the Mzimude and many pleasant

vistas present themselves as you follow the contour path to the top of the Drakensberg Gardens. Near the end of the trail you will see Drakensberg Gardens hotel below you; follow the path down to the hotel from where you will be picked up. The Hikeathon ends here with the option of returning to collect your cars from Seaforth or spending an extra night at the lodge before returning home.