

# Walking, Hiking, Trekking and Wilderness Adventure

## The Amphitheatre Hike

This is regarded as the most famous hike in South Africa not just because it allows you to access the highest escarpment in one day but also because the waterfall is the highest in Africa. In fact it's the 2nd highest in the world, which is why many foreigners have heard of the hike. It is called the Thukela Falls; Thukela means "the startling one" because of its tendency to burst into flood suddenly with no warning! The name reflects how unpredictable the weather is generally in the area.

## Neighbouring Lesotho (passports needed)

It is the highest country in the world having the highest low point of any other. South Africa and Lesotho are separated from one another by the Drakensberg Mountains known in Zulu as Ukhahlamba, which means the barrier of spears. In the 1800's there were three main groups fighting for land throughout this region. The Boer, British and Zulu. As they moved into the land around the Drakensberg they met up with smaller Nguni tribes and the San (the people who did the paintings in caves.) These groups could not compete with them so they moved higher and higher up into the mountains, until they were in such inhospitable land their pursuers left them alone having gained all the fertile land that they needed.

The fact that Lesotho is set right on the top of mountains has influenced the way that the Sotho people live. The area we visit is not the usual tourist destination and is geographically very beautiful with indigenous succulents and amazing rock outcrops. In fact we visit a part of Golden Gate that no other tourists would visit. It is so remote and wild that not even cellphones work. There are no tarred roads and people use horses to travel around. The men still travel great distances, with their cattle, looking for grazing and often sleep out in the open, eating lizards and mice for nourishment. While we are in the area we hike up to cave paintings, across rivers, past herdsman and men coming off the edges of the mountains with their hunting dogs. It is rather like walking into a National Geographic movie. The trip takes a full day, leaving at 08h00 and returning at about 18h00.

## Mont-Aux-Sources via the chain ladder.

This 10 to 12km hike, takes about 6 hours and is strenuous. The chain ladder is a challenge to those afraid of heights.

## Thukela Gorge.

This is a 14km hike which takes about 5 to 6 hours and is moderate to strenuous.

## Fairly Glen.

This is a 5km walk, taking about an hour each way and is suitable even for children.

## Royal Natal National Park.

The spectacular Northern Drakensberg can easily be accessed from the Retreat. The Royal Natal National Park hikes and walks are extremely popular and vary in distance and difficulty, from those suitable for children to others suitable for the more serious hikers. Guided hikes can be arranged.

## Relaxing.

This is a serious business at Drakensberg Mountain Retreat. So please prepare yourself to rest, relax and enjoy the ever-changing, spectacular views of the Drakensberg.

## Birding

A variety of species have been spotted, particularly at the lower levels of the farm. Cape vultures are seen fairly regularly with there being a vulture restaurant about 9km away (as the crow flies) at Sterkfontein Dam.

For daily demonstrations of raptors in flight and their various feeding habits, visit Falcon Ridge in the Central Drakensberg.

# Cultural Excursions

## The Zulu Cultural Village Tours

The Drakensberg is situated in the heart of a very traditional Zulu community. We have designed and run trips into the settlements controlled by Nkosi Miya and Nkosi Hlongwane called Amazizi. Here poverty levels are high due to massive unemployment.

There is a limited economy with a shortage of work and few possibilities for income except for labour. share a hug or 2 with the little ones, we visit schools, Traditional healers or just a drink and a Dance in the local Tavern and contribute in the development of our staff's communities.

## **Basotho village**

Found off the R712 – on the way to Golden Gates and Clarens.

## **Horse Riding**

Rugged Glen, near Royal Natal National Park. Prices vary depending on the length of the Ride. The drive to Rugged Glen takes approximately 50 minutes.

## **Historical Day Tours**

Battlefields – Spioenkop. A number of battlefields are easily visited from the Retreat and guided visits to Spioenkop can be arranged.

## **Voortrekker Monuments**

There are Voortrekker Monuments and information plaques close to the Retreat.

## **San Rock Art**

Cave and rock art can be seen in various caves and rock shelters in the area. The hike to the San art (or Bushman Paintings) at the Drakesnberg Retreat, is fairly strenuous, but well worth it. Other San art can be seen near the Cavern Resort, Cathedral Peak and Injasuthi Valley.

## **Sight Seeing Day Tours.**

### **Golden Gates National Park**

One of the scenic highlights of the Orange Free State. And then drive through to Clarens, which has become a popular “Art Hub”.

### **Royal Natal National Park**

The park is worth the drive. There are also a number of resorts in the area and an Adventure Centre, which children always enjoy.

### **The Central Drakensberg and Champagne Valley.**

### **Fishing and Boating.**

There are a number of good fishing and boating dams in the area. These include Sterkfontein Dam, Woodstock, Spioenkop Dam and Bellpark Dam. Fish found in these dams are yellowfish, carp and bass.

## **Cultural Art and Craft Meander.**

### **Local artists**

Art by local artists can be seen in the Winterton, Bergville, Clarens and Harrismith areas. The work varies from African art to pottery, painting, photography, sculpturing and carpet weaving. Check details with local information outlets.

### **Drakensberg Boy's Choir**

This world famous choir school in the Central Drakensberg holds concerts on Wednesdays at 3.30pm during the school term.

### **Art Hub - Clarens**

The art hub of the village of Clarens is a must visit for those looking for arts, crafts, painting and sculptures to take back home

## **Game and Nature Reserves.**

### **Spioenkop Nature Reserve**

This nature reserve off the R600 has rhino, giraffe, wildebeest and a variety of buck. You can drive or ride through the park. It is approximately a 1 hour and 20 minute drive there.

### **Golf**

Enjoy the scenic beauty of this area by visiting the Hlalanathi Golf Course