

# The Cavern

DRAKENSBERG RESORT & SPA

SINCE 1941



## INFORMATION & ACTIVITIES GUIDE

*Explore, Discover and Wonder!*





As you join us at The Cavern Resort & Spa, in the Northern Drakensberg, the gentle arms of nature immediately cradle you. It is all around you; hillsides of waving grass hiding families of resting Mountain Reedbuck, steep rocky ravines with tumbling waterfalls, Protea-covered slopes, secret places within the forested kloofs. The hotel nestles happily at the head of the valley, hidden from the main berg but offering grand views of faraway sandstone outcrops and spectacular sunrises. Welcome to the great outdoors - there is much to do...

## The Cavern Nature Trail

The Cavern is a Site of Conservation Significance, an honour given to only those few sites in South Africa that qualify by virtue of outstanding natural features. The Cavern Nature Trail has been constructed to present most of these to visitors. It begins near the 70s block and follows well-used paths that link points of particular interest. Thirty information boards have been placed along the trail, illustrating each feature, and telling the story about them.

The adventure begins beneath probably the biggest acacias in the Berg. From here there is a good view of Fern Forest which owes its existence to climate changes within the last million years. Above it can be seen the sandstone and basalt layers that make up the higher Berg. These date back to the break-up of Gondwana.

Once inside the forest look for endemic – found only in South Africa – birds such as the Chorister Robin-chat, Cape White-eye and Bush Blackcap. In shady places in the undergrowth are plants now

famous as house plants throughout the world – Impatiens, Begonia and Streptocarpus.



Above them tower forest giants – Cape Ash, the rare Coffee Pear, and the biggest Cabbage Tree in Africa. Once there were big Yellowwoods too, nineteenth century saw-pits mark the spots where they were felled. Along the path are traces – footprints and droppings – of elusive or nocturnal animals, Porcupine, Caracal, Serval and our resident Leopard.

Once out of the forest meet a whole new world. Mountain grassland is famous for its diversity of spring flowers, most of which bloom shortly after a fire. Among them are Proteas, South Africa's signature plants. Sunbirds and sugarbirds attend their flowers. Soaring high overhead might be the endemic Cape Vulture, or even the legendary Lammergeier – famous for its habit of dropping bones onto a favourite rock. Herds of Eland pass through, or on a steep hillside a family group of Mountain Reedbuck might be seen. Rival groups of Chacma Baboons bark at each other.

Along the stream look for three special birds that are found only where there is clean flowing water; the Black Duck, Mountain Wagtail and Half-collared Kingfisher. Crunched-up crab remains reveal the presence of the Cape Clawless Otter and Water MongOOSE.

Allow two hours to make the most of this trail.



## **Amphitheatre World Heritage Site**

The spectacular Drakensberg Mountains took their place on the international stage with the proclaiming of the 243 000 hectare Drakensberg Park in December 2002 as a World Heritage Site. Of all the World Heritage Sites only 22 have qualified, as the Drakensberg has done, on both cultural and natural criteria – a truly great achievement. International recognition was granted in acknowledgement of the area's unique richness of biological diversity, its endemic and endangered species, its natural beauty and its masterpieces of human creative genius in the form of Bushman rock paintings – the world's greatest collection of rock art.

The area is home to over 2153 species of plants and 298 species of birds with a large number being endemic. There are 48 species of mammal to be found.

## **Bushman Art in the Drakensberg**

There are many rock paintings in the Drakensberg painted by the Bushmen. We are very fortunate to have these artworks as they represent an otherwise lost culture. No-one knows exactly how old the paintings are, but the newest are about 130 years old and the oldest are probably more than 500 years old. The paintings are all on Cave Sandstone, mostly under waterproof overhangs where the paintings are protected from the worst of the sun, wind and rain.

These paintings give us a sort of picture-book of the past history and tell us a lot about how these people lived and what they considered important. Most of the paintings are of animals, and as the pictures are very good, we can tell what animals lived in the Berg at that time, even though many are now extinct. For example there are pictures of elephants which no longer occur here, but independent proof exists that they once did

because 200-year-old bones have been found at Giant's Castle. Lions, Rhinos and Antbears are also in some of their pictures, and these would have migrated from the lowlands during summer and back down when winter arrived. This was in an age when there were no roads or fences to stop them. The Eland were drawn big and important and this tells us how much the Eland meant to the Bushmen. This was the most important food source and there are more pictures of Eland than any other animal. The Eland was always drawn with the neck and shoulders very big and the legs thin and small, to emphasise the important features, just as cartoons do. Men were also drawn in this way, with thin little legs, arms and bodies and big fat buttocks; the more fat stored the stronger the man.

We know from their paintings that they fought a lot. Many very realistic battle scenes are painted, with arrows flying about and dead and dying people, some running away with others chasing them. They probably fought over ownership of the best caves in the area. A classic battle between two Bushmen tribes can be seen at Lone Rock.

The materials used in the paints are all local. Blood, rock or soil rich in rust (ferric oxide) provide reddish brown. Variations in the redness can be obtained by heating the pigment in a fire. Charcoal provides the black, while white is created with bird droppings or clay. Other colours are rare. They used melted fat, beeswax or egg-white to mix with the pigments to make the paint, but they must have had a secret ingredient that made the paint last so long. They painted the white parts of the picture first, and then the other colours. They probably used the hair of the Black Wildebeest mane or tail attached to a reed as a paintbrush, and a pointed bone when they needed fine definition.

Sadly the Bushmen no longer inhabit the berg foothills and their art will not last forever, so it is up to us to preserve it as long as possible.



## *A Look Back in Time – A Well Wooded Valley*

SEVEN naughty children once ran around this farm, playing, fighting and growing. Now we are old, we can look back with fondness and gratitude to God who placed us in this family in this valley.

The seven kids were the progeny of Ruth Carte and Judy Carr; two sisters whose husbands toiled to eke out a living in these lovely mountains.

Bill and Ruth Carte bought the Cavern in 1941 in the middle of World War 2. Bill had only one eye (we never found out why) and was declared unfit for active duty. Judge Thrash, a friend, lent Bill and Ruth the money to buy the Cavern. I think they were also helped by Uncle Charles, my godfather, who lived in Zimbabwe and was better off than most of his relatives.

Bill and Ruth had worked together and fallen in love at the Oaks, near Richmond. The owner of the Oaks had his eye on Ruth and was not pleased when she preferred bald Bill. They therefore left as refugees. In his letter of proposal to Ruth, Bill stated his goal: "to build the most beautiful farm in South Africa".

The Carte kids were: Rosalind, David, Peter and Anthony, born in that order from about 1943 to 1948. Ruth was nicknamed "Maqoembane," which we understood to mean the cow of many calves.

The Carr kids were Robert (born in 1944), Jane and Harvey. As we grew, we became a tight little clan – us against the kids of the guests.

The Cavern in the early days was a guest farm with the emphasis on "farm". Our father, Bill Carte, was a hotelier second and a farmer first. Up at the back we had about 80 cattle, mostly dairy cows, sheep, ducks, chickens, turkeys and pigs. Guests were housed in the sandstone main building with a lumpy thatched roof, also in a number of rondavels dotted about.

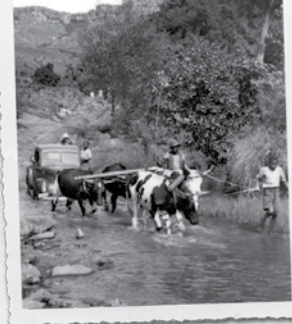
We grew our own fruit and vegetables, which were displayed annually on the Bergville show and were "highly commended". We produced our own milk. There was a separator from which Soleelo would extract cream. In the early years there were no fridges but a sort of cold cabinet in which water would trickle over stones to keep things cool. Ruth Carte could get jelly to set – there, or, if necessary, in the Fern Forest stream, which was cold, summer and winter. Later, paraffin fridges arrived.

We were ahead of most South African farms in having electricity. First there was a pelton wheel driven by a diversion from the Fern Forest stream – our own hydro electric power station.

Later my father bought a Lister diesel and then, memorably in the early 1950s, a mighty 16 horsepower Blackstone diesel engine that would thump away until 10pm or 11pm every night, when my father would hang his boots on a wire in our room and that would choke the great thumper into silence. Thus it was for another 30 years or more before Eskom connected in the 1980s.

In the early days, there was the main building and a number of rondavels dotted about it. There were no "private bathrooms", rather rows of four bathrooms each for ladies and gentlemen. After each guest had bathed, Triphene or Constance would whip in and clean it down with Vim for the next person. Guests queued patiently for baths, which drew hot water from a donkey boiler – two 44-gallon drums over a wood fire.

The brochure proudly mentioned that we had water borne sewerage – three loos for the ladies and three for the men. Every year until today extensions and improvements were built.



As kids we had no idea how special our environment was. The glorious mountains, the splendid forests, the rushing streams, the numerous waterfalls, the bushman paintings were all taken for granted.

The farm animals also provided amusement – and horror because we were our own butchers. We all remember Aliase, our muscled waiter, walking around jovially with a knife a foot long and his hands covered in blood after doing in one of our enormous Landrace pigs – and our father trying to shoo us away from the bloody scene after he had blown away a large ox with his 12-bore.

Ah, the poultry, How many ailing turkey chickens and ducklings did we kids not try to nurse back to health – to be defied by their own determination to die. And the horses. Our parents were good horsepeople and gave us every encouragement. We rode at the Cavern and later at Treverton.

Then there was the road, the dreaded road. It was and remains the end of the road. Travelling from Durban, you left the tar shortly after Estcourt. The “main” road through Winterton and Bergville on to the halt was topped with shale and passable most the year. The last nine miles from the halt were a nightmare when wet. Dozens of guests were stuck, or came unstuck, swerving off the road. Pulling them out with the Willys Jeep, or sometimes oxen, was routine for our parents.

The road to Harrismith was also shale-topped and a “main” road. The Oliviershoek Pass occasionally presented a challenge but Bill was the best mud driver in the district and seldom got stuck. I remember swelling with pride when he took the Ford I-ton bakkie through a mud drift in which seven or eight other vehicles were completely bogged.

The Tugela River would often flood the causeway, cutting the Cavern off completely until my dad and old man Van Rensburg built the “Nook” road to circumvent the Tugela up to Oliviershoek Pass. That is today the road to Montusi. “Rather mud than blood”, my mother used to say. But she never stopped fighting the roads department. Old Mr Boucher with his formidable yellow grader spent half his lifetime improving the road – until the next rains.

Our father, Bill, was a large man with a large voice, which he used to summon the staff with great bellows from the back verandah. He kept scuffing his bald pate on the top of doorways and I recall him weighing himself in Lamberts, the clothing store in Maritzburg – 220 pounds, a weight that none of his sons ever attained. He died of cancer when I was nine and Ant was only six, so our memories of him are somewhat faded. He had a kindly disposition and, unlike his sons, never swore.

During the war years, before I could remember, we hosted some Italian prisoners of war, who built the first tennis court. Initially the natural pool and the waterfall pool were the only two swimming pools.

Bill Carte’s last construction project before he died was Charleswood Dam, which is still there below the tennis court. The dam became the main pool for the seven kids. After Dad died, Bruce Carte built a super

blue rowing boat for the Carte kids. She was well named Happy Days. My father built us a raft based on two 44-gallon petrol drums. It was wildly unstable and would periodically cast everyone on board into 'the sea'.

We kids had free access to the dam even before we could swim. Ros saved me from drowning. I actually think I was unconscious for a short while but no mention was made of the event. On another occasion during a great sea battle, Rob and I jumped from the boat on to the raft to take prisoners. Harvey jumped off. He couldn't swim and went straight to the bottom. Rob and I pulled him out. No-one banned our game. On another memorable occasion a water snake chased Harvey right to the top of a pole at the end of the jetty.

Every summer Sunday the whole guest house would move down to the natural pool for a picnic. Typical English speakers, we were clueless about braaing. Everyone would impale his or her meat on a green wattle stick, sear it in the flames and eat it before it was cooked. No-one thought about a grill, or allowing the fire to burn down to coals.

Before we could swim, we envied those who could frolick around in the Big Pool, while we paddled around the shallows and kept slipping on brown slimy stuff. My first hero was Bill de Jager, who had a cow's lick in his hair and, at 7, swam around the big pool like a dolphin. Ros was the first of us to swim across first the freezing waterfall pool and later the big natural pool.

Our parents left us in the care of Zulu au pairs for much of the day. All seven of us were taken "samben" (come with us) after breakfast and lunch. This involved a short walk to a variety of locations, then playing all morning or afternoon. We boys prized our Dinky toys. We'd make roads and vroom vroom for hours on end. We learned to cut the tops off wattle trees, take a forked stick, pull back the green wattle and let go. Poor Ros once stood in the wrong place and took the forked stick behind the ear.

The wattle and gum forests were full of a strange fungus plant that, when hurled, gave off clouds of yellow dust. These made excellent missiles, which we aimed periodically at passing guests.

We saw our parents only four times a day – at tea time in bed early in the mornings and at all three meals. I remember my father was a keen chess player and couldn't get over the hours he and regular guest Courtney Edmonds sat staring at the board.

Sibling rivalry was intense. My ghastly little brothers kept stealing and spoiling my stuff. Once Peter deliberately broke the spokes of my prized tricycle, which was so high tech that it had a chain. I therefore occasionally had to administer a bloody nose to one or other of the little brothers. They would occasionally gang up on their big brother. Sometimes I would push Peter aside when he was hassling Ant. Then the two of them would fall upon me with fists and shoes.

This non-stop bickering and fighting was a feature of Cavern life until we reached puberty and girls became more important than the stuff we owned. Another reason we gave up fighting was that eventually the brothers were as big as I.

After my father died, dozens of people who really loved my mother, stepped forward to help her: Kate Nettleton came as a guest and joined as a staffer, becoming Mum's right hand right until she died. Natalie van Rensburg stepped in to fill that void, also until she died. Mary Woodrooffe came in and transformed the Cavern garden into an Eden. You have never seen shrubs, flowers and peach trees like it.

Walter Smith, Mum's engineering friend, did a project every Christmas holiday. First he built the Cavern pool, then



the bowling green. We didn't have a tractor; so all the excavation was done by oxen and dam scrapers. Both the pool and the bowling green were excellently built. The bowling green was criss-crossed with French drains, which were filled with stones. It drains well to this day. Next he built the tennis courts. This was all on his annual holiday. Arthur Fuller encouraged Mum on many building and other projects. Those helpers enabled Mum to keep the Cavern going and not to seek work as a matron in a boarding school.

Gradually the teen years overtook us. Precocious Rob Carr collected pictures of Hollywood stars such as Ava Gardner and Marilyn Monroe and enthused about their thoraxes. These delights were lost on us for a while but eventually the penny dropped.

Then dawned rock 'n roll.

I remember vividly returning to Treverton, aged about 11. The biggest jolla in the school, one Dawny Hutton (13) from Estcourt, came back from the hol's with his long dark hair swept back into a DA (duck's ass). There was a wind-up record player at the school and Dawny introduced us to Elvis, singing along raucously to Ready Teddy, TuttiFrutti and Blue Suede Shoes.

The next huge leap forward in our development was the arrival of a real electric radiogram with an amplifier. That made our records sound so much better. The first hi-fi with two speakers and stereo arrived in 1959, totally transforming the Cavern dance.

When we became teenagers, the adults were allowed the first two hours of the dance, after which the teenagers ruled. Many guests came year after year and we became friends and would-be lovers of their kids. Their kids also brought rock records.

My siblings and I were not great dancers. We were a bit inhibited but some of those visitors belonged in Jailhouse Rock. The Fulton boys were three or four years older than we and were kings of the Cavern whenever they visited. We gnashed our teeth unable to make an impression on wondrous teenage girls in 90-yard starched petticoats.

A few years later our day would come and, so long as the Fultons stayed away, we came to rule the roost. If you went back to school having kissed less than three girls, you regarded the holiday as a failure.

It was on night walks that most courtships began. Our hilarious Uncle Roddy started the night walking phenomenon when we were quite small. He would take the seven of us out down the road by torchlight, then switch off the torch and run home with the kids squealing and giggling in terror behind him. Those walks were gradually extended and by our teenage years, went all the way to the natural pool.

We were often love-struck and continued many of the holiday romances with letters from school, often over many months. We were fortunate that, unlike others in the boarding establishment, we did not have to send ourselves Valentine's cards.

*By David Carte*

## AN EVEN FURTHER LOOK BACK IN TIME; GONDWANA, AND EARLIER STILL

Some of the sandstone rock faces in the Little Berg bear impressive black stripes. Echo Cave is a good place to view this feature close up. The stripes are obviously linked to semi-permanent seepage from soil above. But when they dry out they do not disappear altogether, and are fully restored once damp conditions return. What are they?



These are colonies of single-celled cyanobacteria, one of the most ancient of all life forms. They arose in the sea almost four billion years ago, and were the first creatures to photosynthesize, using sunlight as their energy source. Oxygen was the waste product. At first this was consumed by dissolved iron salts, which turned into insoluble rust in the process. The great deposits of iron ore we mine today were formed then. Eventually all the other minerals in the sea were literally glutted with oxygen, so the excess had nowhere to go except the atmosphere. Without cyanobacteria our fresh, life-giving air would not have evolved, nor would most familiar animal life, including us. Today cyanobacteria have largely been elbowed aside by more vigorous life forms. Only in a few tiny refuges do they survive. What a privilege that they share one with us at the Cavern.

Much nearer in time comes the epic of Gondwana. This was the great super-continent where Africa, South America, Antarctica and Australia were joined together. The whole of the interior was sandy desert during the Triassic period about 220 million years ago. Under pressure, it formed the Cave Sandstone that forms the Little Berg today, and which encircles the Cavern valley. Small dinosaurs appeared at this time, as their fossilised footprints testify. The sandstone is often undercut at the base, and it is here that Bushman paintings are found.

About 150 million years ago, during the Jurassic period, intense volcanic activity pushed basaltic lava through the sandstone. There was no single volcano, just a never-ending ooze that covered much of Gondwana to a depth of two kilometres. Simultaneously Gondwana began to fragment and drift apart to form the continents we know today. As basalt solidifies it forms perfect hexagonal columns. A neat remnant of this event can be seen on the skyline above Echo Cave.

*By David Johnson*



# THE GREAT OUTDOORS

The variety of activities and attractions at The Cavern allow for something for everyone. For those wanting to explore the great outdoors, Bushman paintings, age-old rock carvings, an interesting cannibal history and hours of hiking and mountain-biking trails are available. For parents with young toddlers and children, there's the playroom staffed with nannies, safe and exciting playgrounds and a range of games and fun activities. This is a haven for kids keen on fishing, horse riding, tennis, swimming and exploring. For adults, bowls, tennis and croquet are firm favourites and the spa, overlooking a majestic canopy of ancient ferns, offers a wide range of massages and relaxation treatments. There are dozens of board games for family time by the fireside and a quiet lounge stocked with books for gentle afternoons spent drinking tea and nibbling on The Cavern's infamous Cavern Crunchies.

## HIKING AND TREKKING

### Guided Morning Walks

Every morning at 09h15 and 09h30 a guided walk to one of the many beauty spots near The Cavern leaves from the front lawn. The physical demand on the hiker varies from one person to another. The grades listed have been prepared by active hikers, so check your fitness against the grade before setting off. Another popular activity is the Breakfast Walk, ending off with a scrumptious breakfast, overlooking the picturesque Cavern Valley.

The notice board outside the Quiet Lounge has details of all walks and activities.

PLEASE SIGN THE LIST BELOW THE NOTICE BOARD TO ENABLE US TO CATER FOR TEAS AND THE LEGENDARY CAVERN CRUNCHIES.

### Grades of Trekking

#### S Grade – Short(ish) Stroll

Strolls suit anybody who can walk. They last one to two hours at a very gentle pace.

Strolls at The Cavern include:

Leopard Loop  
Cowslip Falls Trail  
Top Dams Trail

Porcupine Trail  
Baboon Trail

#### E Grade – Terrain Easy

These walks suit people who wish to enjoy the hills and mountains without much strenuous activity and at a slower pace. Expect three hours' walking with a maximum of approximately four hours.

Easy terrain hikes at The Cavern include:

Nature Trail (short walk)  
Reedbank Tail (short walk)  
Lone Rock (intermediate walk)  
Silent Woman (intermediate walk)  
Jim's Cave (intermediate walk)

#### D Grade – Terrain Moderate

These are reasonably energetic walks on hills rather than mountains, but nothing too strenuous, although some paths may be rough. Average walking time will be less than five hours.

Cannibal Cavern  
Jackal Hill

Surprise Ridge

#### D+ Grade – Terrain Moderate

Expect energetic hikes among hills and relatively easy mountain walking. Walking time will rarely exceed six hours.

Camel's Hump  
Sugar Loaf

Echo Cave  
Tugela Gorge (all day)

#### C Grade – Terrain Moderate to Hard

Hiking time will be about six hours.  
Hlolela

#### C+ Grade – Terrain Hard

Trekking might be strenuous, offering excitement and challenges, with up to seven hours walking and occasional scrambling. Chain ladders may be encountered on some routes.

Little Hut & Mills Gap  
The Diamond  
National Park Grotto

Metsi Matso Dam  
Goodoo Falls

#### B Grade – Terrain Hard to Severe

Hard walking and scrambling, up to an average of eight hours. Please note from trekking

descriptions the altitudes that are likely to be reached. We advise that previous experience of hard mountain walking is essential. Chain ladders may be encountered, so a good head for heights is also necessary. Some routes pass through snow. The Cavern's Big Five Amphitheatre Ascent

Day hikes can be organised on request. All-day hikes include the Amphitheatre Ascent, Tugela Gorge, The Cavern's 'Big 5' and other beautiful destinations.

We must stress that these walks and climbs are not intended as tests of endurance or time trials. To appreciate the real splendour of the mountains, one needs time to absorb them and that calls for frequent stops along the way.

Most 'disastrous' walks are caused by some members of the party walking too fast and thereby putting pressure on the not so young and fit. Our experience has proved that to enjoy the outing we need to slow the party down – on holiday time is not of the essence.

**WARNING:** Guests who wish to walk without a guide, please sign the register at Reception. Maps are available from both Activities Desk and Reception.

Remember on all hikes:

- a jacket • suitable footwear
- water • sunscreen and a hat

## SELF-GUIDED HIKE FROM THE CAVERN

### Lone Rock

GRADE: E

TIME: 2½ hours.

DISTANCE: 4 km return.

TERRAIN: Undulating path with moderate slopes. Best done with a hotel guide, as it is easy to miss the paintings. The Bushman paintings are the most accessible in the Drakensberg, and are the main focus of this walk. Take the Top Gate out of The Cavern, turn right past the football field and dams, continuing up the Sugar Loaf path. Go up another small rise. As the path flattens out look for a gate to the left. Now follow the path until reaching a gate on the left. Go through the gate and this path takes you to the paintings on the north side of the orange rock. These paintings are deteriorating with age; please do not touch them, nor splash them with water.

### Cannibal Cavern

GRADE: D

TIME: 4-5 hours.

DISTANCE: 6 km return, or 7 km round trip.

TERRAIN: Undulating with a few steep sections.

Top Gate is the starting point. Take the path right, leading past the football field. Keep left, going uphill, past Top Dams. Go through a gate and bear left towards TV Ridge. From the aerial the contour path begins to rise. Look out for Ground Woodpeckers sunning on the rocks. After walking alongside a fence, go through a gate on the right. The path goes through some small



### CHECKLIST Animals to look out for:

- Water Mongoose ☐
- Porcupine ☐
- Bushbuck ☐
- Grey Duiker ☐
- Leguaan ☐
- Eland ☐
- Serval ☐
- Caracal ☐



- Dormouse ☐
- Striped Field Mouse ☐
- Mountain Reedbuck ☐
- Cape Hare ☐
- Black-backed Jackal ☐
- Leopard ☐
- Baboon ☐
- Grey Rhebuck ☐



forest patches, look out for the rare and endemic Berg Bamboo. Right beside the path, and quite close to the cave, is a nice specimen (and the only one in the vicinity) of *Protea subvestita*. Return to the hotel by the same route, or take the longer circular route going via Surprise Ridge.

Many of the large boulders seen along the route are home to isolated large trees, and even miniature forests. A bare rock may seem an austere home, but has several advantages. First it is a refuge from fire, and nearly all “rock” trees are otherwise found only in the forest where fire rarely penetrates. Second, a rock acts as a heat store, soaking up sunshine by day, and slowly releasing warmth at night, keeping frost at bay. Third, all the rain that falls on it is channelled to one or a few spots – exactly where the trees are rooted. And there is plenty of soil, because most of these rocks are not outcrops, but boulders that have rolled down from higher up, and are sitting on a full soil profile. How did the trees get there? Any passing bird perches on the highest available point. In its droppings will be seeds from fruits eaten at a previous pit-stop. The seed will automatically be washed into the best germination spot by the next rain. Once it has matured and begins fruiting it becomes an added attraction for yet more birds to visit.

Cannibal Cavern was home to Bushmen in earlier times, and two very faded paintings still exist. Since then it housed real cannibals early in the nineteenth century. During King Shaka's wars of expansion, refugees from losing tribes fled south and west, often dispossessing even weaker tribes on the way. Cannibal Cavern became the last refuge, where a few survivors could hold out. They dared not reveal their hiding place, so there were hard times with little food. When starvation set in the only choice was to eat their own dead. This led to their tribal name of Amazizi – amazimo is the Zulu word for cannibal. When the troubles finally ended, they moved down to the flat lands below to resume normal life. Many people working at The Cavern today are seventh generation descendants of the

original cannibals. Since cannibal times the cave has been used to shelter up to 500 cattle, and a stone shepherd's dwelling has been built near the cave entrance. A permanent trickle of water at the back of the cave made it a tenable home, and provides a welcome drink for walkers today.

### **Sugar Loaf**

GRADE: D+      TIME: 4 hours.

DISTANCE: 7 km return.

TERRAIN: Undulating path with a few steep slopes and fairly easy scrambles.

Top Gate is the starting point. Take the path right, leading past the football field. In spring, particularly after a burn, clumps of *Barleria monticola*, a lovely mauve flower, erupt out of the blackness. Keep left, going uphill, where the path forks. Do not turn left to the dams and the aerial, but keep straight on towards the cliff face, with the fence on your left. This path leads to Sugar Loaf Gap. Once on top of the plateau take note of any marker that identifies the route back; many a walker has had difficulty in finding the exact spot on the return. Now go left, path not well marked, to the Sugar Loaf summit. Water may be difficult to locate, so make sure to carry some. Return the same way.

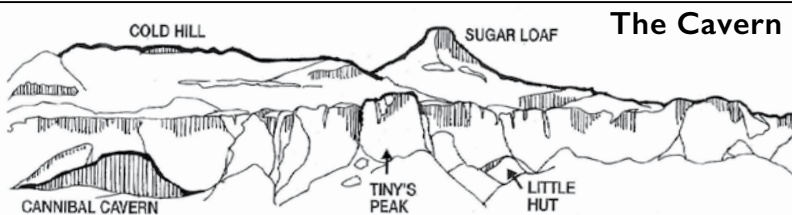
### **The Silent Woman**

GRADE: E      TIME: 3 hours.

DISTANCE: 7 km return.

TERRAIN: Undulating path with moderate slopes and gradients.

STARTING POINT: Take Fern Forest path and at the cairn of rocks turn right. At the fork in the path on top of the ridge, bear left towards the Sungubala Valley. The path leads you to the jeep track. Follow the jeep track uphill to the gate. At the gate bear right into the valley. Approximately 2 km from the gate cross a very small stream. 30 m further on turn off to your right at the marker on the road side. Follow this path bearing down into a grove of Yellowwood trees and the stream. Once amongst the trees there is a large rock face to your right. Go around to the back of this huge rock to see the Rock Carving of the Silent Woman which faces into the opposite cliff. Come back the same way.

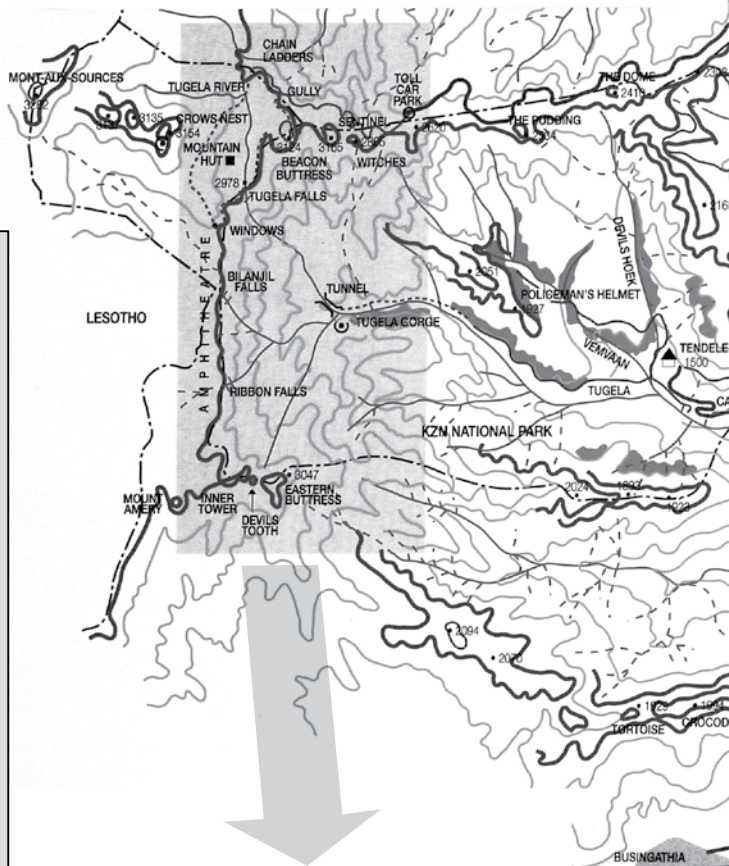


## The Cavern

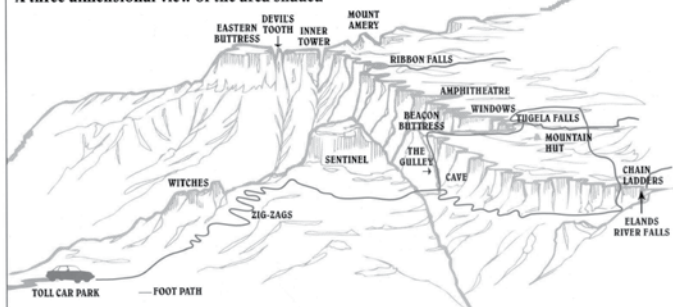
## Northern KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg, World Heritage Site

### Main Peaks

Amphitheatre.....	2930m
Babangibona.....	2320m
Beacon Buttress.....	3122m
The Bell.....	2930m
Broome Hill.....	2212m
Camel's Hump.....	1892m
Cathedral Peak.....	3004m
Cathkin Peak.....	3149m
Cavern Berg Resort.....	1500m
Champagne Castle Peak.....	3377m
Cold Ridge.....	2170m
Devil's Tooth.....	3044m
Eastern Buttress.....	0 47 m
Giant's Castle.....	2930m
Tugela Gorge.....	1630m
Hlolela.....	2127m
Injasuti Peak.....	3070m
Montusi Mountain.....	1626m
Montusi Lodge.....	1350m
Mont-Aux-Sources Peak.....	3282m
Oliviershoek Pass.....	1732m
Plowman's Kop.....	2045m
Policeman's Helmet.....	1950m
Sani Pass.....	2740m
Sentinel.....	3165m
Sentinel Car Park.....	2620m
Stoney Pass.....	2070m
Sugarloaf.....	2085m
Sungubala Mountain.....	2133m
Sungubala Camp.....	1550m
Surprise Ridge.....	1830m
Thendele Chalets.....	1500m
Witsieshoek Mtn Resort.....	2135m

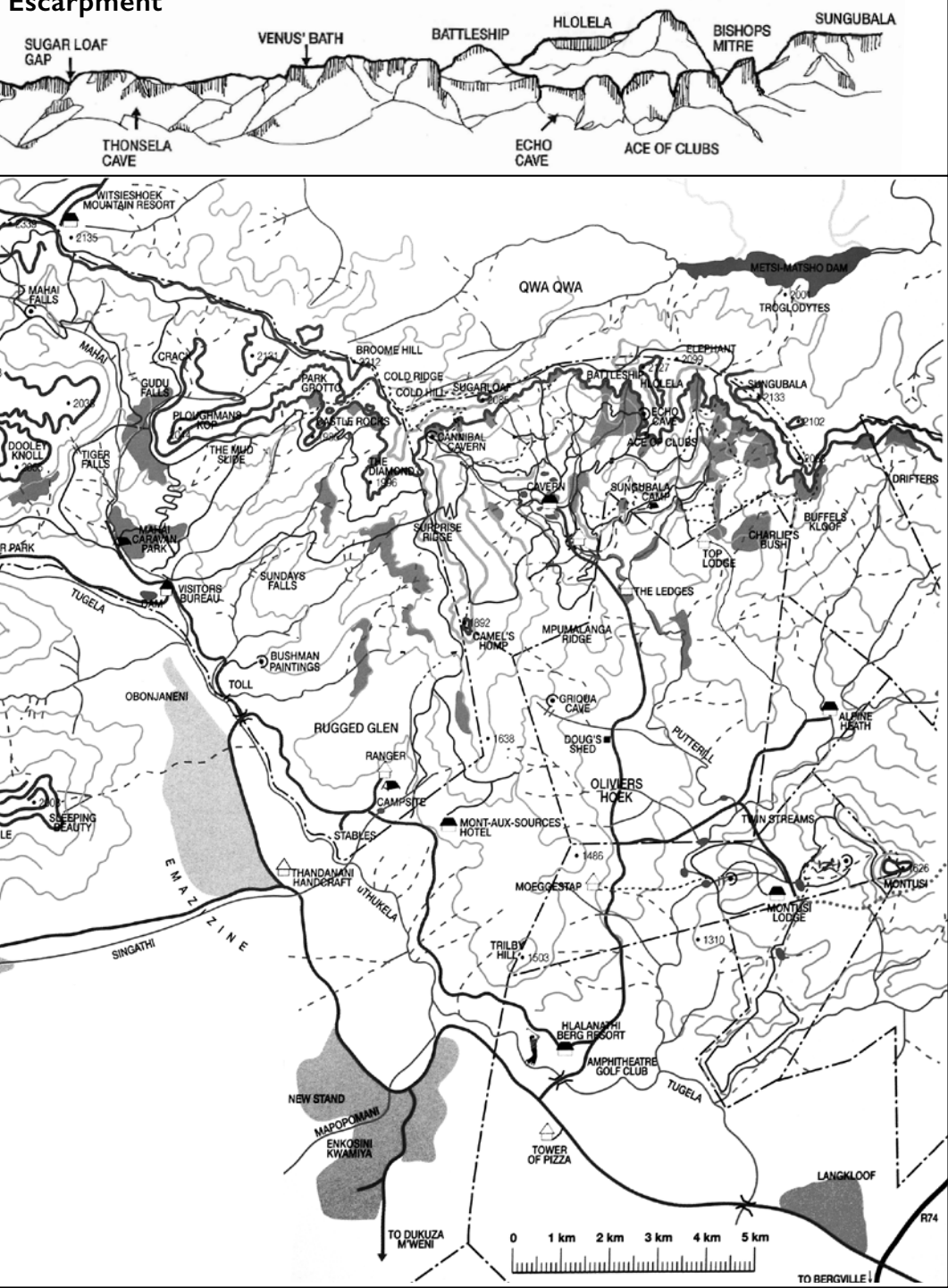


A three dimensional view of the area shaded





# Escarpment



This carving was done by the late William Chalmers in the early 1950s. He was a poet and wanderer who found himself in this area in search of Bushman artefacts. Having fallen ill he was taken in by the Coventry family of the farm Sungubala, who nursed him back to health.

### **Surprise Ridge**

GRADE: D                      TIME: 3½ hours.  
DISTANCE: 7 km return or circular route.  
TERRAIN: Undulating path with moderate slopes and gradients.

The ridge holds two surprises. The first is that on approaching the ridge one finds that the real ridge is further on. The second is the magnificent view of the main Berg, from Cathkin to Cathedral and the Amphitheatre that suddenly appears. Top Gate is the starting point. Proceed to the TV aerial as for the start of the Cannibal Cavern walk. Then follow the “contour” path, without taking the right turn to Cannibal Cavern. At the confluence of the streams take the path easing left. Subsequently it takes several zig-zags on the ascent.

An alternative route is to go left after Top Gate. Almost immediately, under the pines, look for a white ground orchid, *Disperis fanninia*, that flowers in summer. The path then goes past Cowslip Falls – named not after a pretty flower, but after a cow that slipped to its doom on a dark and stormy night. Beyond Cowslip Dam the path forks. Go left, across the little bridge. In autumn the area to the right is a mass of orange *Leonotis* flowers, a magnet for sunbirds. There are always a few white flowers among the red; it's the same species, but lacking the orange pigment, an example of albinism. A little further, also on the right, is a classic specimen of the Red Rock Fig hugging a big boulder. New spring growth flushes brilliant red. The tree never grows any “taller” because every winter frost trims it back. The path will join up with the other route at the confluence of the streams.

### **Echo Cave**

GRADE: C+                      TIME: 4 hours return.  
DISTANCE: 5 km.  
TERRAIN: Difficult – steep, slippery and scrambly in places.

The starting point is to follow the directions through the Fern Forest. Upon emerging from the end of the forest take the right fork leading up the hill. This path is well defined, and as it ascends it bears right past an old fence line. Stick to this path, which now ascends steeply. Ignore right turns as you approach the sandstone wall. After a few zig-zags the top of the plateau is reached. A well-earned rest will give sufficient time to enjoy the magnificent views of the Amphitheatre and surrounding mountains. Just before the cliff the path veers to the left, continues in through the trees, and after a short walk reaches the Echo Cave. Be careful crossing the mouth of the cave; the sandstone is very slippery when wet. The cave wall bears impressive black stripes. These are caused by cyanobacteria growing in seepage water.

Return on the same route. An alternative is to go back to the point where you entered the cave, but take the path descending to the right. There are way-marks on the trees. This path is very steep in places, but the trees provide good hand-holds. A strong walking stick is helpful too. After the first stream look out on your left for two very large yellow-wood trees; these are hundreds of years old.

Yellow-woods have great historical significance. Because they grow straight, and have wood that is easily worked, they were heavily exploited until the twentieth century for furniture and building timber. Because Echo Cave forest is so remote and steep it was never exploited, which is why it has so many yellow-woods. On the greater time-scale yellow-woods contribute to our knowledge of Earth history. Almost identical species are found on all the southern continents, and even as fossils under Antarctic ice. This points to a common ancestry when all these regions were physically joined. This super-continent was Gondwana, and although continental drift has pulled its fragments apart, each still carries some of the original inhabitants.

Close to the path you will see a small, delicate bamboo; it is rare and endemic – found only – in

the Berg. Its unique feature is that the leaf veins form a perfect cross-hatch pattern, unlike the parallel veins of other bamboos. Look through a magnifying glass or reversed binoculars. Flowering is rare, only every 40 years or so. Before leaving the forest the path crosses a second stream. Here there are two triangular steel steps anchored into the rock. Use these as the rock is very slippery.

Once the path leaves the forest you will descend towards the Sandstone Quarry. Take the left fork downhill. This leads to a steep stepped descent. From here the way to the hotel is obvious.

## HIKES STARTING FROM THE ROYAL NATAL NATIONAL PARK

The Royal Natal National Park has an interesting history dating back many years. In 1836 while exploring Basutoland, two French missionaries, Arbrousset and Daumas, first discovered Mont-Aux-Sources, literally the mountain of sources (of the rivers). In 1908 the idea of establishing a National Park in this area was conceived, and the territory was explored by Senator Frank Churchill, General Wylie, Colonel Dick and Mr W. O. Coventry. Recommendations were put forward, but it was not until 1916 that the Secretary of Lands authorised the reservation of five farms and certain Crown Lands, totalling approximately 8160 acres, and entrusted it to the Executive Committee of the Natal Province.

On the 16 September 1916 the National Park came into being. An advisory committee was appointed to control the park. Shortly afterwards the Natal Provincial Administration purchased the farm "Goodoo", upon which a hostel had already been opened in 1913, and incorporated a small portion of the Upper Tugela Native Trust Land, thus swelling the National Park to its present 20 000 acres. The Advisory Committee was abolished in January 1942, and the park was administered by the Provincial Council until the formation of the Natal Parks, Game and Fish Preservation Board on the 22 December 1947.

Mr F. O. Williams held the first hostel lease rights on

the farm Goodoo that he obtained from Mr W. O. Coventry, the original owner. Mr Coventry became lessee of the whole Park in 1919, and took over the post of Park Superintendent in August 1924 at the grand salary of £5 per month. In 1926 he was succeeded by Otto and Walter Zunkel, who each added their share of buildings and improvements. Mr Alan Short was the next Superintendent, and was in charge when the Royal Family visited the park in May 1947, as a result of which its name changed to "Royal Natal National Park".

### The Cascades

GRADE: S (Or E if taking the round route).

TIME: 2 hours. (Or 3½ hours round route).

DISTANCE: 5 km return. (8 km round trip).

TERRAIN: Easy path. (Undulating with a few steep parts on the round trip).

From the park gate take the road to the Mahai campsite public car park (only campsite residents may take their car beyond this point). Walk along the road past the campsite. This joins the path to the Queen's Causeway and the Cascades. The arch over the river was built in 1947 for the visit by King George VI and his family. From there a good path leads to McKinlay's Pool where the Gudu stream meets the Mahai. To make a round trip, although the going is very steep, take the path from the boulders near McKinlay's Pool up towards Dooley. It joins the Tiger Falls-Gudu Bush path. Return via Tiger Falls or Gudu Bush.

### Sigubudu Valley Bushman Paintings

GRADE: S

TIME: 2 hours (Or 1 hour if driving part way).

DISTANCE: 6 km return.

TERRAIN: Undulating path.

Park in the demarcated area on the left of the road, to meet an authorised guide, when you drive towards the visitor centre from the entrance gate. Unaccompanied visits are no longer permitted because of continued damage to the paintings. They are now quite faint and easily missed without the guide. Turn up a sign-posted path to the left. This leads directly to the paintings. The guide will interpret them.

## **Tugela Gorge**

GRADE: D+

GRADE: C+ if you continue past the Chain Ladder for better views and more excitement.

TIME: 5 hours return.

DISTANCE: 14 km return.

TERRAIN: The path is easy to follow and climbs gradually. The only part that may present difficulties is the last two kilometres in the Gorge itself, which involves boulder hopping and some wading in fast knee-deep water.

The Tugela Gorge hike is one of the finest one-day hikes in South Africa. A guide with packed lunches provided by The Cavern enables you to make a full day of this trip. This walk is a must-do in the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg. As well as proper walking boots it may be useful to take along a lighter pair of shoes or sandals to walk through the river to get to the Gorge. In summer make sure you take a costume for a lovely swim in the rock pools. Drink plenty of liquids – the river water is safe – and take along a hat.

This walk begins in the Tugela car park, and is a wonderful experience of “climbing” into the mountains. Follow the signs to “The Gorge”. After 15 minutes you will come to a bridge over the tributary from Devil’s Hoek. Cross the bridge and follow the path to the left. Not long after crossing the intersecting stream from Devil’s Hoek, look out for Policeman’s Helmet on the high ground to the right overlooking Vermaan Valley. Initially the trail is almost flat, allowing you to admire the magnificent scenery to the full. The path winds along, above and parallel to the Tugela River.

The scenery is spectacular, and in spring and summer the valley is a carpet of indigenous flora. The path meanders in and out of lush forests cascading down the hills into the river valley below. Views of the Amphitheatre wall get increasingly more magnificent as you approach the Gorge – the wall rises over 1800 m from the valley floor. Before the path begins to steepen it is still possible to leave the path to get to the river for water, should you think of stopping for a picnic lunch here.

The path disappears just before the Gorge proper. The last kilometre through the Gorge

entails three boulder crossings of the river – simple enough unless in flood, and takes about an hour. If at all possible it is well worth continuing, but anyone nervous about their knees might do well to stop here. With a little bit of effort the most picturesque scenery in the park is to be seen at the far end, along with a welcome cup of tea from The Cavern guide.

At this point there are a number of things to look for; the Devil’s Tooth, the Tunnel ahead and the Chain Ladder. Pause for a swim in the crystal clear white sandstone rock pools before attempting the Chain Ladder. At the Tunnel (the path really ends here, but the Tunnel can be bypassed by a scramble up a small chain ladder) the river flows through an impassable rock formation. Some local information suggests that there is a way through here, but don’t attempt it. The mapped trail to the right leads into the Amphitheatre. A boulder hop further up the Tugela for about half a kilometre will reward you with a complete change of scenery at every step.

You may see or hear baboons barking on the high rocks. Three beautiful and locally endemic birds often perch on the rocks too: the Ground Woodpecker, Cape Rock-thrush and Buff-streaked Chat. Greater and Southern Double-collared Sunbirds, and Gurney’s Sugarbird can be seen on the Protea flowers.

Keep an eye out for thunderstorms that quickly brew above the Amphitheatre wall, but above all else remember to enjoy yourself in this special place. The return down trip to the car park is faster than the up trip, so savour the moments you treasure the most.

### **Before you go:**

Check the weather forecast before setting off. Heavy rain causes very dangerous flash floods. Sunblock is especially important on this hike, the terrain seems to focus the sun’s rays on hikers. There is no mountain rescue emergency procedure here, and no recognition of distress signals. So if hiking without a guide it is essential that you advise hotel staff of your route and expected time of return. Then stick to these.



## The Amphitheatre Ascent (2926 m)

GRADE: B

TIME: 6 hours hiking plus 4 hours driving.

DISTANCE: 6-8 km plus 240 km drive.

TERRAIN: Steep at times but on a reasonable path.

Narrow ledges to cross with two chain ladders to climb to reach the summit. Need a head for heights.

To spend the day on the summit of the Amphitheatre, in the KZN Drakensberg, must surely be one of the highlights of a visit to South Africa. The breath-taking views and grandeur of the scenery, with the Tugela River plummeting in five massive leaps, over 900 m into the gorge below, creates an unforgettable experience. In the distance are the rolling Midlands of KZN, mostly grassland, with forest strips along some of the rivers.

The Amphitheatre also has a dramatic history. Once it lay at the centre of the super-continent Gondwana. Then, 140 million years ago, the greatest lava flow of all time erupted here, solidifying into basalt. This same volcanism fractured Gondwana, and continental drift carried Antarctica and Australia away, leaving Africa with brand new coastline only 100 km from the Amphitheatre. Since then, erosion has cut back to the Drakensberg, where the last of the Gondwana landscape remains. The "dragon's teeth" appearance of the Berg from below is due to the different speeds with which the rivers cut back into the Amphitheatre face. The actual top is relatively flat.

From the Sentinel car park a broad path leads up the looming northern flank of the Sentinel (3165 m). At this altitude grasses, wild flowers and the Lammergeier flourish. The path leads to the base of the Sentinel. Peer over the edge to the left and see the Tugela Gorge far below in the Royal Natal National Park. Due east lies the Devil's Tooth, a completely isolated pinnacle of rock, between the Eastern Buttress (3047 m) and the Inner Tower (3044 m). Enjoy this spectacular view before the path follows a contour to the right round the back of the Sentinel and Beacon Buttress (3121 m) to the famous 'Chain Ladder'. This mildly intimidating structure, two ladders

of 25 m and 15 m, allows easy access to the Amphitheatre plateau above. Those with faint hearts can ascend or descend via the steep Gully between the Sentinel and Beacon Buttress.

From the top of the Chain Ladder the edge of the Escarpment lies 2 km to the east. The best position from which to appreciate the magnificent views is some way to the south of the waterfall itself at the Window Crevice. From the top of the Chain Ladder follow the path along the stream for 500 m then turn to the southeast and follow the rising slope to the top of Crows Nest Ridge and to the edge of the Escarpment and the Window Crevice. Time does not permit you to stay too long at the Window Crevice.

Head north down the ridge to the top of the Tugela Falls for lunch. It's difficult to convey the fear of the being so close to the edge with such a huge drop below. Try not to worry, as the rocks have not moved yet, so sit back and admire the view.

After lunch and some refreshments the walk back to the car park should be started by 15h00. One has the choice of descending either by the Chain Ladder or the Gully between the Beacon Buttress and the Sentinel. The gully is steep and full of small, loose rocks and should not be attempted in wet conditions. The Gully path leads back to the contour path, and then to the car park.

### Before you go:

Hiking in this area demands some preparation. Always wear sound shoes or boots. Be aware that this area is subject to rapid changes of weather in all seasons. Always take waterproof clothing and something warm even if you are roasting in the car park below. It has been known to hail and snow in summer at high altitude. At this height pay heed to the fact that exercise is more tiring – the air is much thinner – and that one dehydrates quickly.

### Park fees and charges:

There is a small toll road fee and a park entrance fee per person. A guide can be hired from the Cavern for the day.



## SUGGESTED SELF-DRIVE TRIPS

### **Oliviershoek Pass (1750 m)**

TIME: 1½ hours DISTANCE: 60 km return.

Go to the main Harrismith-Bergville road (R74), turn left up the pass. From the view point at the top of the pass look down onto the Kilburn Dam below, and the Woodstock Dam in the distance. These storage dams supply water to the Drakensberg pumped storage/Tugela Vaal system. Initially water is pumped over the escarpment towards the Vaal using surplus coal-fired electricity. It is then stored in the Driekloof Dam, just behind you. But when the demand for electricity exceeds supply, some of the water is then released back down the escarpment into the Tugela to generate electricity for the national grid. As well as electricity this system also serves Gauteng with essential water from the Drakensberg catchment. When Driekloof Dam overflows it feeds the Sterkfontein Dam from where the water can gravitate down natural river courses to the Vaal Dam.

### **Retiefklip and Voortrekkerpas**

TIME: 1½ hours. DISTANCE: 80 km return.

#### **SCENIC AND HISTORICAL DRIVE**

Set off up the Oliviershoek Pass. After about 5 km from the top of the pass, take the right turn to Retief Pass. The road becomes gravel. After a short distance turn right to the Voortrekkerpas. This is where Piet Retief and his advance party trekked down the Escarpment into Natal. At the pass there is a trail following the wagon tracks along the route followed by the Voortrekkers. There is a monument of a barefooted woman walking away from Natal. This is a tribute to Susanna Smit, sister of Gert Maritz, who declared the she would rather 'trek' barefoot over the Berg than live in Natal under British rule. If you continue to the foot of Kerkenberg you will arrive at Retiefklip. Here Retief's daughter, Deborah, painted her father's name on a rock to commemorate his birthday. Retief with his advance party arrived here on 11 November 1837 to meet the main Voortrekker party.

The pass and monument are on private land. No entry permit is required, but please respect the landowner's rights.

### **Amphitheatre**

TIME: 4 hours. DISTANCE: 240 km return.

#### **VERY SCENIC DRIVE & OPTIONAL SENSATIONAL HIKE.**

This is an interesting and scenic trip to an altitude of 2500 m. Set off up the Oliviershoek Pass. As you pass Sterkfontein Dam on your left, look out for the viewpoint overlooking the dam. Then continue until you reach a T-junction. Turn left onto the R712 to Phuthaditjhaba and Golden Gate. You will pass the Sterkfontein Dam wall on your left. Further on take a left turn into Phuthaditjhaba, towards Witsieshoek Mountain Resort. This road eventually becomes a dirt road. Soon after the change you will pass a toll where a small entrance fee is payable.

After 5 km you will reach a fork in the road. Left takes you to Witsieshoek Mountain Resort (2300 m) and right to the Sentinel car park. As you climb higher take time to stop at intervals on the road and look left down onto the Royal Natal National Park over 1000 m below. Once at the car park another spectacular view is only a five minute walk along the path. Ahead is the massive Sentinel (3047 m) and the Devil's Tooth (2941 m). [If you intend doing the full hike to the summit, please consult the Entertainment Desk.

### **Basotho Cultural Village & Golden Gate**

TIME: 4 hours.

DISTANCE: 200 km (for the Cultural Village).

TIME: 6 hours.

DISTANCE: 240 km return (incl. Golden Gate).

#### **VERY SCENIC AND CULTURAL DRIVE**

Take the route as for the Amphitheatre. Instead of turning left to Phuthaditjhaba, continue straight ahead. The road narrows slightly, but is tarred all the way. Pass through 22 000 ha of conservation area where you will see a variety of antelopes and smaller animals. Look out for the signpost to Basotho Cultural Village on your left. There is a very informative reception centre here and regular guided tours take you on an historical tour of Basotho culture.

To reach the Golden Gate National Park continue straight instead of turning to the Cultural Village. The road winds its way through a valley flanked by orange sandstone cliffs that give Golden Gate its name. This drive is very spectacular in the late summer when the poplar trees are turning gold and the countryside is ablaze with autumn colours.

Off the main road there are a number of marked circular game drives through the Golden Gate National Park.

### **Clarens**

TIME: 5 hours. DISTANCE: 200 km return.

#### **SCENIC VILLAGE**

Take the route to Golden Gate. If you continue along the main route you will arrive at the charming Free State village of Clarens with its quaint gift shops and art galleries. There are a number of inviting restaurants and pubs.

### **Royal Natal National Park & Thandanani**

TIME: 2 hours. DISTANCE: 45 km return.

#### **SCENIC AND CULTURAL DRIVE WITH OPTIONAL HIKING IN THE NATIONAL PARK**

Take the tar road out of the Cavern and when you reach the T-junction, turn right to the Royal Natal National Park. The tarred road takes you through the Amazizi area. Soon after you cross the narrow bridge over the Singati River, you will see the Thandanani Handcraft Centre on the right. Here one can purchase many handmade and woven goods, made by the local people. Also have a look inside a traditional Zulu beehive hut.

From Thandanani continue along the tarred road until you reach KZN Wildlife checkpoint. An entry fee is payable here. The Mahai campsite and Thendele are within the National Park. Take your time to absorb the magnificent Amphitheatre views. As you continue you will reach the KZN Wildlife Visitor's Centre and Curio Shop on your left.

To drive within 7 km of the Amphitheatre wall turn left to Thendele. The road ends at the start of the popular Tugela Gorge Walk; only residents are allowed to proceed further to Thendele camp itself.

### **Spioenkop Battlefield**

TIME: 3 hours. DISTANCE: 150 km return.

#### **HISTORICAL DRIVE**

Take the R74 to Bergville. Just as you reach the town take the left turn to Ladysmith (R616). Continue for about 32 km and turn right to the Spioenkop Battlefield. The route is well sign-posted. There is 10 km of gravel road before you reach the parking area. Self-guide booklets can be purchased from the KZN Wildlife guard.

### **Spioenkop Game Reserve & Dam**

TIME: 4 hours.

DISTANCE: 200 km return.

#### **SCENIC DRIVE WITH GAME VIEWING**

Take the R74 to Bergville. Pass Bergville and continue for 19 km to Winterton. Before entering the town take a left turn indicating Spioenkop. The reserve is open from 06h00 to 18h00 and is controlled by the KZN Wildlife. There is an entrance fee to be paid. One can see a large variety of antelopes, Rhino, Zebra, Giraffe, etc. Water sports are permitted on the dam.

### **Drakensberg Boys Choir School**

TIME: 3 hours.

DISTANCE: 200 km return.

#### **SCENIC DRIVE WITH OPTIONAL CHOIR PERFORMANCE**

Take the R74 to Winterton. As you enter the town take the right turn over the railway line towards the Central Berg resorts. Follow this road into the Champagne Valley. This world renowned choir school is on your right about 4 km after you pass the Champagne Sports Resort on your left. The choir gives weekly performances. Booking through the school is essential. Details from the Activities Desk.

### **Drakensberg Storage Scheme**

TIME: 3 hours. DISTANCE: 50 km return.

This power station is a joint venture between Eskom and the Department of Water Affairs, transferring water from the Tugela for use in Gauteng. All installations are underground. The four reversible pump turbines, situated 156 m below ground, generate 1000 MW of electricity for the national grid. Discover how a power station works by joining the guided tour. Ask for details at Reception.

## DO'S AND DONT'S OF THE BERG

The Drakensberg is a fragile environment that cannot be abused in any way. The harsh extremes of climate and the rugged nature of the terrain make survival of plants and animals difficult, and the influence of humans must be kept to a minimum. This advice is aimed at environmental care. Ignoring the precautions below could lead to permanent damage to the environment.

**PATHS:** A network of paths has been laid out for your enjoyment and to reduce impact on the environment to a minimum. It may be tempting to take short cuts and to stray from the established paths, but this has been the cause of more erosion in recent years than almost anything else. Vegetation that may have taken centuries to establish itself is damaged, and heavy rains do the rest.

**FIRES:** Controlled fires are a necessary part of management, but the use of this "tool" is very carefully considered and monitored. Uncontrolled fires can be devastating. A small fire that spreads or a carelessly discarded match or cigarette can cause untold damage to vegetation and small creatures, even endangering human life. No fires or firewood collecting are permitted.

**LITTER:** Litter is unsightly and causes harm to the environment. All litter must be carried out with you, and should not be buried.

**FLOWERS:** The spring flowers in the Drakensberg are magnificent, although flowers may be found throughout the year. It may be tempting to pick flowers but by doing so you will deprive someone else of the pleasure of seeing them – it is a serious offence to pick wild flowers.

**ROCK ART:** The Bushmen who left us the graphic accounts of their way of life are long gone and their art is irreplaceable. Wetting the paintings will reduce their life, while disfiguring them means they are gone forever. Carving your name or initials on any surface in the Berg is strictly forbidden.

**ROCKS:** Some people are tempted to roll rocks down hills. This is extremely dangerous and, in addition to endangering the lives of others, it can damage vegetation and even start erosion. Simply turning a rock over can start a small landslide, so it's best not to try it.

**EQUIPMENT & SAFETY IN THE BERG:** For your safety, please complete the register at Reception when walking without a guide. Walking boots with good ankle support, moulded soles and waterproof, breathable uppers are recommended. The berg weather is very unpredictable. Protection from the sun is vital (sun creams and adequate head protection should be worn). Drink plenty of fluids, always ensuring you are adequately hydrated.



### Rinkhals

Identification: Normally olive to dark brown or dull black with 1 or 2 white cross bars on the throat. Averages 1 metre in length. In threat pose it raises its head and spreads a neck hood.

## SNAKES – Be aware of these species in our region

### Puff Adder

Identification: Variable yellowish/brown with dark chevron or zig-zag type markings. Averages 60-90 cm in length.



### Berg Adder

Identification: Greyish olive to dark brown/black with geometric patterns of triangular markings. Averages 30-50 cm in length.

### Basic Guidelines in the Case of a Snake Bite:

1. Immediately apply firm pressure by broad bandage or suitable substitute. Do NOT use a tourniquet.
2. Limit movement – movement increases venom circulation. Remember to keep calm & reassure the victim.

3. Bring the person down the mountain and to the doctor ASAP.

- ☒ DO NOT give the victim alcohol
- ☒ DO NOT cut the bitten area
- ☒ DO NOT suck the bite
- ☒ DO NOT panic





# TREES OF THE CAVERN

*Acacia sieberiana* – Paperbark Thorn  
*Acokanthera oppositifolia* – Common Poison Bush  
*Allophylus africanus* – Black False Currant  
*Andrachne ovalis* – False Lightning Bush  
*Apodytes dimidiata* – White Pear  
*Bowkeria verticillata* – Natal Shell-flower Bush  
*Buddleja dysophylla* – Climbing Sage  
*Buddleja salviifolia* – Sagewood  
*Burchellia bubalina* – Wild Pomegranate  
*Calodendrum capense* – Cape Chestnut  
*Calpurnia aurea* – Natal Laburnum  
*Canthium ciliatum* – Hairy Turkey-berry  
*Canthium kuntzeanum* – Mountain Turkey-berry  
*Canthium mundianum* – Rock Alder  
*Carissa bispinosa* – Forest Num-num  
*Celtis africana* – White Stinkwood  
*Chionanthus foveolatus* – Common Pock Ironwood  
*Chrysanthemoides monilifera* – Bush-tick Berry  
*Clausena anisata* – Perdepis  
*Clerodendrum glabrum* – Cat's Whiskers  
*Cliffortia nitidula* – Starry Rice-bush  
*Clusia pulchella* – Warty-fruited Clusia  
*Combretum erythrophyllum* – River Bushwillow  
*Combretum kraussii* – Forest Bushwillow  
*Cryptocarya woodii* – Cape Quince  
*Cussonia paniculata* – Mountain Cabbage Tree  
*Cussonia spicata* – Common Cabbage Tree  
*Cyathea dregei* – Tree Fern  
*Dais cotinifolia* – Pompon Tree  
*Diospyros lycioides* – Bluebush  
*Diospyros whyteana* – Bladdernut  
*Dovyalis zeyheri* – Wild Apricot  
*Ekebergia capensis* – Cape Ash  
*Euclea crispa* – Blue Guarri  
*Ficus burkei* – Common Wild Fig  
*Ficus ingens* – Red-leaved Rock Fig  
*Grewia occidentalis* – Crossberry  
*Greyia sutherlandii* – Mountain Bottlebrush  
*Gymnosporia buxifolia* – Common Spikethorn  
*Halleria lucida* – Tree Fuchsia  
*Heteromorpha arborescens* – Parsley Tree  
*Hippobromus pauciflorus* – False Horsewood  
*Ilex mitis* – Cape Holly  
*Kiggelaria africana* – Wild Peach

*Leucosidea sericea* – Ouhout  
*Maytenus acuminata* – Silky Bark  
*Maytenus peduncularis* – Cape Blackwood  
*Maytenus undata* – Koko Tree  
*Myrica pilulifera* – Broad-leaved Waxberry  
*Myrica serrata* – Lance-leaved Waxberry  
*Myrsine africana* – Cape Myrtle  
*Ocotea bullata* – Black Stinkwood  
*Olea capensis* – False Ironwood  
*Olinia emarginata* – Mountain Hard Pear  
*Osyris lanceolata* – Transvaal Sumach  
*Pachystigma macrocalyx* – Mountain Wild-medlar  
*Passerina montana* – Mountain Gonna  
*Pavetta cooperi* – Mountain Bride's Bush  
*Pittosporum viridiflorum* – Cheesewood  
*Pleurostylia capensis* – Coffee Pear  
*Podocarpus falcatus* – Outeniqua Yellowwood  
*Podocarpus henkelii* – Henkel's Yellowwood  
*Podocarpus latifolius* – Real Yellowwood  
*Protea caffra* – Natal Sugarbush  
*Protea roupelliae* – Silver Sugarbush  
*Protea subvestita* – Lip-flower Sugarbush  
*Pterocelastrus rostratus* – Red Candlewood  
*Rapanea melanophloeos* – Cape Beech  
*Rhamnus prinoides* – Dogwood  
*Rhoicissus revoli* – Bushveld Grape  
*Rhoicissus tridentata* – Bushman's Grape  
*Salacia gerrardii* – Climbing Salacia  
*Salix mucronata* – Natal Willow  
*Searsia (Rhus) dentata* – Nana-berry  
*Searsia (Rhus) discolor* – Grassveld Currant  
*Searsia (Rhus) pallens* – Warty Currant  
*Searsia (Rhus) pyroides* – Common Wild Currant  
*Searsia (Rhus) tomentosa* – Real Wild Currant  
*Scolopia mundii* – Red Pear  
*Scolopia zeyheri* – Thorn Pear  
*Scutia myrtina* – Cat Thorn  
*Solanum giganteum* – Healing-leaf Tree  
*Thamnocalamus tessellatus* – Berg Bamboo  
*Trimeria grandifolia* – Wild Mulberry  
*Trimeria trinervis* – Small-leaved Wild Mulberry  
*Vepris lanceolata* – White Ironwood  
*Zanthoxylum davyi* – Forest Knobwood



## CHECKLIST: BIRDS OF THE CAVERN (Roberts7 sequence)

Coqui Francolin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Buff-spotted Flufftail	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pied Crow	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grey-winged Francolin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Common Moorhen	<input type="checkbox"/>	White-necked Raven	<input type="checkbox"/>
Red-winged Francolin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Common Greenshank	<input type="checkbox"/>	Common Fiscal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Red-necked Spurfowl	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spotted Thick-knee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grey Cuckooshrike	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swainson's Spurfowl	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blacksmith Lapwing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Cuckooshrike	<input type="checkbox"/>
Common Quail	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Cuckoo Hawk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Southern Black Tit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helmeted Guineafowl	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-shouldered Kite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brown-throated Martin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Egyptian Goose	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Fish-Eagle	<input type="checkbox"/>	Barn Swallow	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spur-winged Goose	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lammergeier	<input type="checkbox"/>	White-throated Swallow	<input type="checkbox"/>
African Black Duck	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cape Vulture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greater Striped Swallow	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yellow-billed Duck	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Harrier-Hawk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rock Martin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greater Honeyguide	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Goshawk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Common House-Martin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesser Honeyguide	<input type="checkbox"/>	Little Sparrowhawk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Saw-wing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brown-backed Honeybird	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dark-capped Bulbul	<input type="checkbox"/>
Red-throated Wryneck	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Sparrowhawk	<input type="checkbox"/>	Barratt's Warbler	<input type="checkbox"/>
Golden-tailed Woodpecker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steppe Buzzard	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cape Grassbird	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ground Woodpecker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Forest Buzzard	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Reed-Warbler	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cardinal Woodpecker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jackal Buzzard	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesser Swamp-Warbler	<input type="checkbox"/>
Olive Woodpecker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Verreaux's Eagle	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dark-capped Yellow Warbler	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black-collared Barbet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Booted Eagle	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-billed Crombec	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crested Barbet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Martial Eagle	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler	<input type="checkbox"/>
Southern Ground-Hornbill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-crested Eagle	<input type="checkbox"/>	Willow Warbler	<input type="checkbox"/>
African Hoopoe	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Crowned Eagle	<input type="checkbox"/>	Broad-tailed Warbler	<input type="checkbox"/>
Green Wood-Hoopoe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Secretarybird	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrow-marked Babbler	<input type="checkbox"/>
Half-collared Kingfisher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rock Kestrel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bush Blackcap	<input type="checkbox"/>
Malachite Kingfisher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amur Falcon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cape White-eye	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brown-hooded Kingfisher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lanner Falcon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lazy Cisticola	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giant Kingfisher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Peregrine Falcon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wailing Cisticola	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pied Kingfisher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Little Grebe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Levaillant's Cisticola	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speckled Mousebird	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Darter	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neddicky	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jacobin Cuckoo	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reed Cormorant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Zitting Cisticola	<input type="checkbox"/>
Red-chested Cuckoo	<input type="checkbox"/>	White-breasted Cormorant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wing-snapping Cisticola	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black Cuckoo	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grey Heron	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drakensberg Prinia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Klaas's Cuckoo	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-headed Heron	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bar-throated Apalis	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diderick Cuckoo	<input type="checkbox"/>	Goliath Heron	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rufous-naped Lark	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alpine Swift	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cattle Egret	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cape Rock-Thrush	<input type="checkbox"/>
Common Swift	<input type="checkbox"/>	Little Bittern	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sentinel Rock-Thrush	<input type="checkbox"/>
African Black Swift	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hamerkop	<input type="checkbox"/>	Groundscraper Thrush	<input type="checkbox"/>
Little Swift	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hadedda Ibis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Olive Thrush	<input type="checkbox"/>
Horus Swift	<input type="checkbox"/>	Southern Bald Ibis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Karoo Thrush	<input type="checkbox"/>
White-rumped Swift	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Sacred Ibis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Southern Black Flycatcher	<input type="checkbox"/>
African Wood-Owl	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Spoonbill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fiscal Flycatcher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marsh Owl	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Stork	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spotted Flycatcher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fiery-necked Nightjar	<input type="checkbox"/>	White Stork	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Dusky Flycatcher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Freckled Nightjar	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fork-tailed Drongo	<input type="checkbox"/>	White-starred Robin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speckled Pigeon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fairy Flycatcher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cape Robin-Chat	<input type="checkbox"/>
African Olive-Pigeon	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Paradise-Flycatcher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chorister Robin-Chat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lemon Dove	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-backed Puffback	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Stonechat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laughing Dove	<input type="checkbox"/>	Southern Boubou	<input type="checkbox"/>	Buff-streaked Chat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cape Turtle-Dove	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bokmakierie	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mountain Wheatear	<input type="checkbox"/>
Red-eyed Dove	<input type="checkbox"/>	Olive Bush-Shrike	<input type="checkbox"/>	Familiar Chat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Namaqua Dove	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cape Batis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Anteating Chat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Denham's Bustard	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cape Crow	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mocking Cliff-Chat	<input type="checkbox"/>

Red-winged Starling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Southern Red Bishop	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cape Wagtail	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cape Glossy Starling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yellow Bishop	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mountain Wagtail	<input type="checkbox"/>
Violet-backed Starling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fan-tailed Widowbird	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cape Longclaw	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pied Starling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-collared Widowbird	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Rock Pipit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Common Myna	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-tailed Widowbird	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Pipit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amethyst Sunbird	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Firefinch	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plain-backed Pipit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Malachite Sunbird	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweet Waxbill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-billed Pipit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Southern Double-collared Sunbird	<input type="checkbox"/>	Common Waxbill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cape Canary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greater Double-collared Sunbird	<input type="checkbox"/>	Orange-breasted Waxbill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Forest Canary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gurney's Sugarbird	<input type="checkbox"/>	African Quailfinch	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yellow-fronted Canary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spectacled Weaver	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bronze Mannikin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yellow Canary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cape Weaver	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dusky Indigobird	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brimstone Canary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Southern Masked-Weaver	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pin-tailed Whydah	<input type="checkbox"/>	Streaky-headed Seedeater	<input type="checkbox"/>
Red-billed Quelea	<input type="checkbox"/>	House Sparrow	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yellow-crowned Bishop	<input type="checkbox"/>	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	<input type="checkbox"/>	Golden-breasted Bunting	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Have a look & find.... Tick the box! ☒

**Molerat home:** Molerats live in colonies under the ground. They eat bulbs and tubers of plants and they make tunnels to find them. They need to get rid of the soil they dig out when making the tunnels and they also need to get fresh air, so that is what makes the heaps we see.



**Dragonflies:** Male dragonflies live next to a stream or dam and have a little territory which they guard against other dragonflies. The females, who are duller in colour, come to visit them. Then they mate and she lays many eggs directly into the water. The larval stage lives on the bottom of the pond. Later the fully grown larva climbs out of the water, its skin splits, and a new dragonfly emerges.



**Bushbuck:** These buck live on their own and only get together to breed. Only the males have horns. They eat leaves and fruits, but not grass. You will see them on the forest edge (or in our garden!).



**Moss:** This is a very ancient kind of plant and has been on earth for millions of years. Mosses live only in shady, damp places. They do not have flowers, and their seeds are called spores.



**Yellowwood tree:** This is an evergreen tree that can grow very tall indeed. It does not have flowers like most other trees, but has soft green cones and is related to Pine trees.



**Protea:** There are many different Proteas in the Cape, and they are all bushes, but here at the Cavern there are three Protea trees. They have lovely big flowers which offer nectar to the sunbirds and sugarbirds.

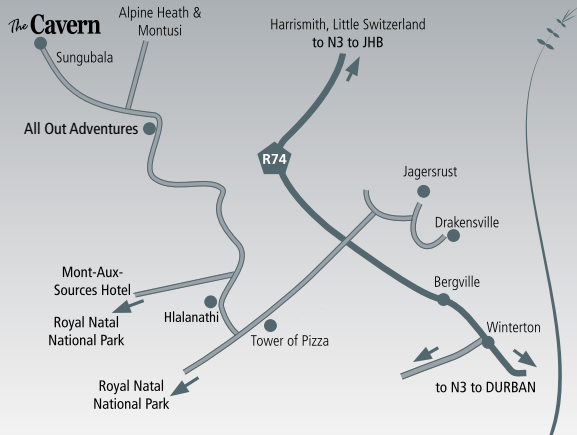
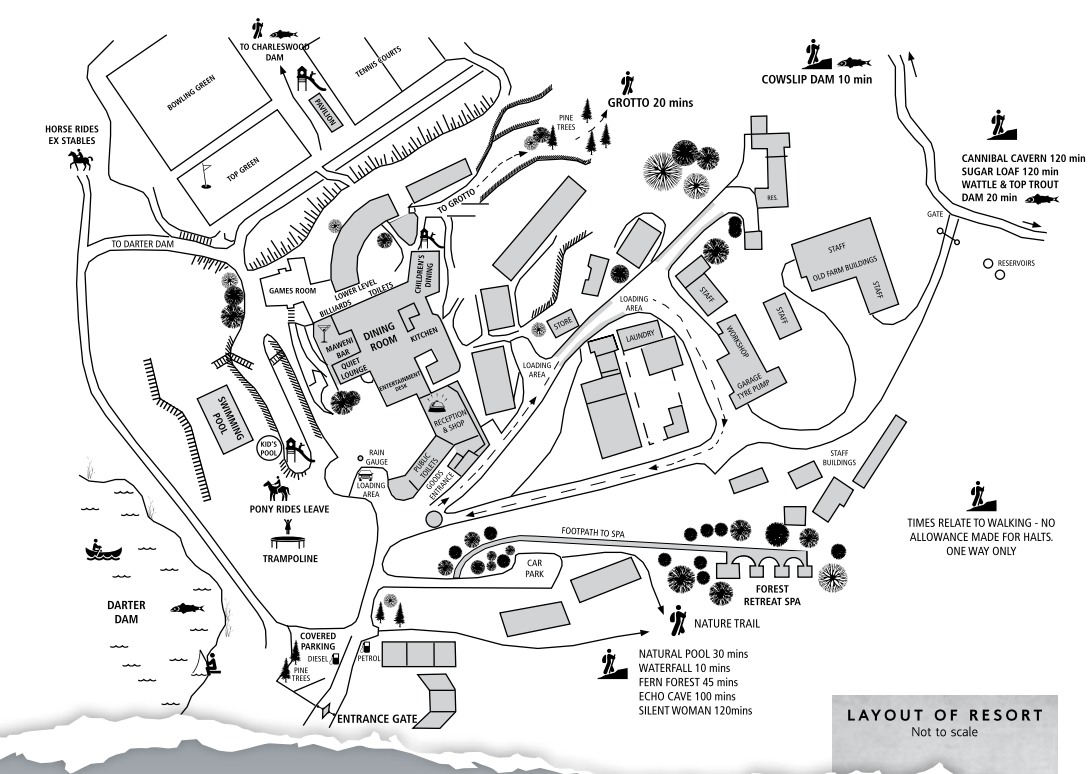


**Round pebble:** The round pebbles you find in the streams were once sharp pieces of rock high on the mountain. After they fell into the river, the rough edges were knocked off while they rolled down the stream, a little way each time the river flooded.



**Bracken:** This is a fern and the same plant can be found all over the world. It is slightly poisonous so the animals do not eat it. It can be a bit of a problem if it grows too strongly, because it shades out the grass, so farmers don't always like it.





# The Cavern

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