

REEDBUCK TRAIL

DISTANCE: 2 km

GRADE: E

TIME: 1 hour; return or round trip

The starting point is behind the children's dining room. The path leads through the pine trees. Beyond the pines head for a big cypress tree growing next to an underground stream sink-hole. Pass this tree on the right. The path goes over a rock, through a kissing gate, and five minutes further on reaches the Grotto. This is a good place to see "house plants" that are kept indoors in pots in colder countries. This is their real home. Begonia, impatiens and streptocarpus, all popular in Europe, are native here. They make good pot plants because they flower well in partial shade, provided they get lots of water. Another famous pot plant living here is the maidenhair fern. Look also for liverworts that make a damp "wall-hanging". They are the oldest of all land plants. They represent the epic stage where plants first colonised land around 480 million years ago. They have since been pushed aside by more modern plants, and hold on only in deep damp shade or where water drips continuously. You can return on the same route, but there is an alternative. Cross the stream at the Grotto, taking the path uphill. It's a bit steep, but reinforced where it matters. At the top go left, along First Ridge. Leopard footprints have been seen on this path, and there are lovely views. Go through the fence above the stables and follow the log path home.

LEOPARD'S LOOP

DISTANCE: 2 km **GRADE:** S, river crossings

TIME: 1 hour; return or round trip

The starting point is just alongside the lower tennis court. Walk towards the Stables via Charleswood Dam, and along Darter Dam wall. At the northern side of the dam cross the river and then follow the meandering path through the valley. There are several river crossings. Continue past the school and the low lying road bridge, keeping Fan Falls on the right. The path meanders up the hill, across the bridge and then the path heads onto the road through a kissing-gate beside the Cavern entrance sign. Cross the road and walk down to the Natural

Pool. Return home via the road or the Porcupine Trail on the opposite side of the river.

COWSLIP FALLS TRAIL

DISTANCE: 2 km

GRADE: S

TIME: 1 hour; return or round trip

TERRAIN: Undulating well-marked path.

Top Gate is the starting point. Take the path to the left along the old Jeep track to Cowslip Falls Dam. Follow the track past the dam and then bear right uphill and along a contour towards Top Dam. Pass between Top Dam & Wattle Dam, through the gate and descend to the resort along the main route.

BABOON TRAIL

DISTANCE: 1.5 km

GRADE: S

TIME: 1 hour; return or round trip

Starting point is above the Spa – The Putterills weir path. Follow the path on an easy gradient through the Fern Forest, crossing the stream several times. You will pass May's Falls and cross the river once more. The path then climbs up the ridge and goes out into protea woodland. The endemic Drakensberg prinia – a tiny warbler with a very long tail – lives here. Eventually the path crosses a stream. Immediately after the gate, take the lower path that circles back to The Cavern. From this side of the valley there is an excellent view of the whole forest. It may look eternal, but has not always been here. The Afro-montane forest of East Africa spread southwards during a wet period during the last million years. Although today's climate is again drier, this type of forest holds on in damp sheltered spots all the way to the Cape.

TOP DAMS TRAIL

DISTANCE: 1.5 km

GRADE: S

TIME: ½ hour; return or round trip

Top Gate is the starting point. Take the path right, leading past the football field. Keep left, going uphill, where the path forks at the Gate. The Wattle Dam will be on the left in front of you & take the path to the right to get to Top Dams. There is a shelter for shade. Between the Top Dams follow the path which brings you back to the Wattle Dam and then return home the same way.

The Cavern

A FEW SHORT SELF-GUIDED WALKS

We are blessed with some of the most magnificent trekking and hiking trails in the region. All hikes are along walking paths with undulating terrain. Wear comfortable footwear with good support and tread. These recommended self-guided trails are not marked on the routes with colour. The colour on the map is to identify one trail from the other. Happy walking!

CATEGORIES:

S Grade – Short(ish) Stroll S

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

E Grade – Terrain Easy

These walks suit people who wish to enjoy the hills without much strenuous activity and at a slower pace. These may include some short awkward sections of stream crossing & a few steep gradients.

NATURE TRAIL

DISTANCE: 2 km

GRADE: E

TIME: 2 hours round trip

The starting point is the car park behind the 70s block. There is an information board here, and many more information boards at points of particular interest along the way. Walk up the mowed slope, turning below Forest Retreat path at the top, keeping the 70s on your right. Then down to the bottom of the mowed grass, picking up the path to the left. Cross the bridge into the Fern Forest, and then turn immediately left. The path leads all the way through the forest. Near the cairn in the middle of the forest look for the tallest tree in the Fern Forest. It is a Cape ash and is at least 200 years old. The species is common here, and many seedlings spring up in the hotel grounds. Birds are not easily seen in the forest, but the cairn is a good place to sit and wait for them. The "best" species are those that are endemic to South Africa – found only here; chorister robin-chat, Cape white-eye, bush blackcap, forest canary, Barratt's warbler, southern boubou. Further along the trail is the biggest cabbage tree in the Berg, and probably in all Africa. It is at least 150 years old. Branches form only

after flowering, and this only happens in full sunshine. So when the tree was young, and making its first branches, this spot must have been the very edge of the forest, otherwise it would have been shaded. Forests expand and shrink naturally all the time. Close by, an elongated pit marks the spot where a large tree was felled over 100 years ago. No machinery was available so the tree had to be hand-sawn into boards on the spot. The pit was dug under the fallen trunk to allow a man to work at one end of a huge two-handled saw, while the other worker stood on top of the trunk. The sawing had to be precise, and was back-breakingly hard. Continue along the contour path through and out of the forest. To find the rest of the information boards take the first path left going downhill. The path crosses a stream, re-enters the forest and leads to some half-shaded pools. This is a good spot to sit quietly and wait for three birds that are typical of clean flowing water: the black duck, mountain wagtail and half-collared kingfisher. A little further on is Putterill's Weir. Cross the stream again here, and the path leads directly back to The Cavern.

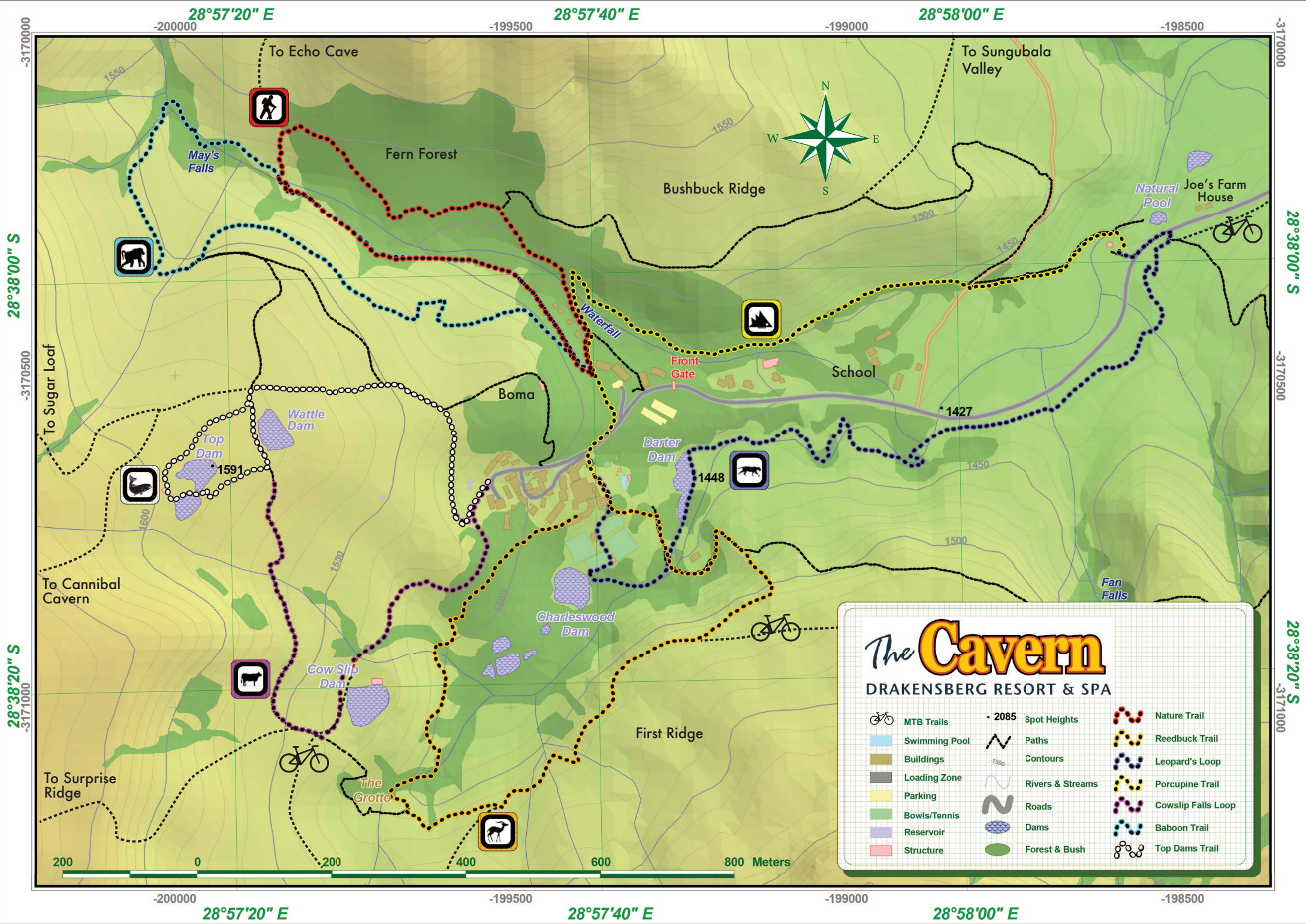
PORCUPINE TRAIL

DISTANCE: 1.5 km

GRADE: S

TIME: 1 hour; return or round trip

The starting point is the car park behind the 70s block. Walk up the mowed slope, turning sharp right below Forest Retreat path. Then down to the bottom of the mowed grass, picking up the path to the left. Cross the bridge into the Fern Forest, and then turn immediately right. The path follows the river and exits the forest. You will cross the Sungubala jeep track about 200 metres before the school. Take a left path ahead through the bushes, down to a narrow flood plain. This is the highest spot in the Berg where acacias occur. These are Acacia sieberiana, typical of plains where silt has been deposited by long-ago floods. This is a likely spot to see two special reptiles. One is the Drakensberg dwarf chamaeleon. Adults are turquoise, juveniles sandy-coloured, but the key feature is their armoured appearance. This species is endemic to the Drakensberg. The other is the legless lizard. At first sight it resembles a thin brown-striped snake, but it cannot glide like a snake, and has the tiniest legs imaginable. It lashes from side to side and is easily cornered. The legs can then (just) be seen. Be prepared for a swim at the Natural Pool at the end. The rocks are slippery when wet, be careful. Come back along the main road.



The Cavern

DRAKENSBERG RESORT & SPA

MTB Trails	2085 Spot Heights	Nature Trail
Swimming Pool	Paths	Reedbuck Trail
Buildings	Contours	Leopard's Loop
Loading Zone	Rivers & Streams	Porcupine Trail
Parking	Roads	Cowslip Falls Loop
Bowls/Tennis	Dams	Baboon Trail
Reservoir	Forest & Bush	Top Dams Trail
Structure		