

# WELCOME TO OUR HIKING GUIDE



**PLEASE ENSURE YOU HAVE SIGNED THE HIKING REGISTER  
IN RECEPTION BEFORE STARTING YOUR HIKE. BE SAFE AND  
ADHERE TO HIKING PROTOCOL. STAY HYDRATED AND HAVE  
FUN!**

## **GUIDE TO WALK GRADINGS:**

“A” = Gentle/easy. “B” = Moderate. “C” = Strenuous. “D” = Difficult.  
All times are estimates based on a relaxed, comfortable walking pace.



# The Do and Don'ts of the 'Berg

**Hotel phone: 036 488 1888**

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 not only to permanent damage to the environment, but to prosecution to offenders.

**Please note: There are groups of Basotho traders passing through this area, and it is advisable, for your own safety, to limit your interaction with them as much as possible.**

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 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 to cook on 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 flowers.

ROCK ART: The San (Bushmen) who left us graphic accounts of their life are long gone and their art is irreplaceable. Going to San painting sites is only permitted if accompanied by an accredited guide. Do not touch or wet the paintings as this will reduce their life. Their rock art is unique and can only be found in few places, so treasure it.

ROCKS: Some people are tempted to roll rocks down hills. This is extremely dangerous and can endanger the lives of others, damage vegetation and start erosion. Simply turning a rock over can start a small landslide, so it is best not to do it.

## SAFETY IN THE BERG

For your own safety, always complete the register at Reception when walking without a guide. Comfortable, good tread, lightweight walking shoes are recommended. Always ensure you have ample warm clothing for cold or wet weather. The mountain Berg weather is very unpredictable.

Protection from the sun is vital, even in winter. Sun creams and adequate head protection should be worn. Drink plenty of fluids always ensuring you are adequately hydrated.

SPRAINS – The most typical injury occurring on walks/hikes is a sprain. If you are near a stream submerge the limb in cold water for about 10 minutes. Bandage the wound and if necessary use a stick to assist with walking.

DEHYDRATION – This may occur if insufficient liquids are drunk. Typical signs of dehydration are headaches, disorientation and fainting. Cool the patient down with water, ensuring that he/she consumes plenty of fluids.



# Ashlea's Amble

40 minute ROUND TRIP

DIFFICULTY: 'A' = EASY

This 40 minute circular walk takes you into the lovely uMhlonhlo River valley. Unlike the older path which runs a fair distance away from the actual uMhlonhlo River, this newly cut path stays as close to the river as possible and, in places, gives easy access to the sparkling river water and some lovely pools.

Walk out of Reception, turn right, and head up the road past the games room. About 50m later, just as the road starts to climb steeply to the right, you will see a stone cairn and signs indicating a left turn down the hill towards Doreen Falls and Rainbow Gorge. Head down this path and cross the river. Immediately after the crossing take the right hand fork marked Ashlea's Amble and Doreen Falls.

About 50 metres further up this path you will see another Ashlea's Amble signboard indicating a right turn down towards the river. Continue along this path which meanders up the valley, sometimes right next to the river and at other times a little further away, but always staying on the left hand bank.

Eventually the path will lead directly down to the river where you will have to cross to continue with the walk. The path then continues on the right hand bank for about 100 metres before it turns sharply up the hill to the right. You then climb out of the valley and make your way back to the Hotel after joining the main path coming down from Doreen Falls.



# Lake Jarred Viewpoint

30-40 MIN. RETURN

DIFFICULTY: "A" - A VERY GENTLE WALK

This is a very easy 30-40 minute return walk to the benches overlooking the trout dam known as Lake Jarred. Lake Jarred is situated just below the trout hatchery on the uMlambonja River

The walk begins at the sundial near the children's play room.

Turn right and walk past rooms 15 – 41. Continue past room 405, and go through the stile. Here you will see a signboard indicating the start of a number of walks. For Lake Jarred you will go straight along the path, towards the mountains, passing underneath the trees.

The path meanders a little way and soon you will see a sign to the right indicating the path to the viewpoint.

This is the ideal stroll as a sun downer walk. You can take a drink with you and enjoy it while overlooking the peaceful lake and watching the sun set behind the majestic mountains. If you are lucky you might even spot the family of otters that live in the lake.

You can either return along the same path or head down the hill on the path, crossing the small stream feeding into Lake Jarred until you meet the trout farm dust road. Turn right to head back to the Hotel making it a pleasant circular route. You can also then stop off at the magnificent chapel on your way back up the hill.



# uMlambonja Valley

1½-2 HOURS RETURN

DIFFICULTY: "A"- GENTLE/EASY

This relatively easy, pleasant walk begins at the sundial near the children's play room. Leave the sundial and head up the stairs following the concrete path and the signs to the stables.

At the road turn right and head up the hill. You will pass the cell phone tower on your left and water reservoirs on both sides of you.

Continue up the track keeping the stables on your left before easing right up the track towards the helipad.

Pass around to the left of the helipad buildings and then follow the rough road up the hill. At the top you will come onto a soccer field. The path now goes along the right hand touch line of the soccer field and then begins to head into the lovely uMlambonja Valley.

Continue along the path and a few minutes later you will notice an unmarked path going off to the left. You must stay right, on the main path, and head down into the valley.

The next land mark will be a triangular stone cairn showing the direction to Blue Pools to the left and Xeni Cave and Neptune's Pool to the right.

Looking up the uMlambonja Valley to the escarpment in front of you, you will be able to see the Cockade and Elephant on the left, and the sheer wall of the uMlambonja Buttress visible behind the sharp peak of Mount Helga on the right.

At the stone cairn you must now take a sharp right turn and head back to the hotel along the jogging route which is marked with green and yellow running figure signs.

On the way back you will notice the trout hatchery in the valley to your left as well as Lake Jarred which can be used by guests for trout fishing.



# Doreen Falls

1½-2 HOURS RETURN

DIFFICULTY: "A" – GENTLE WALK

This 2 hour return walk to Doreen Falls begins at the sundial near the children's play room.

Leave the sundial and head straight up the stairs following the concrete path and the signs to the stables.

At the road, turn right and head up the hill. You will pass the cell phone tower on your left and water reservoirs on both sides of you.

The stable entrance will be on your left. Go through the gate/stile and head diagonally down the path way with the paddock on your right.

Go through the gate and follow the path. On your right will be a wattle plantation.

Soon you will come to a crossroad, (a sign indicates that the jogging trail goes off to the right at this point) – continue straight on. Soon you will see a sign where the path splits, the one going right up the hill to Mushroom Rock and the other keeping left and heading up the valley towards Doreen Falls.

Stay left and a little later you will cross a little stream. The path then goes right, up a stepped path making for comfortable walking.

A little further on, the path again splits At this point you will see an old concrete sign board with the words "Doreen Falls" on it parallel to the path. The right hand path (well used) is the one heading to Doreen Falls and the left heads up the ridge towards Ribbon Falls

Stay right and you will find Doreen Falls just ahead of you.



# Oqalweni Fern Forest

2 HOURS RETURN

DIFFICULTY: "B" – MODERATE

The 2 hour walk to the Oqalweni Fern Forest begins at the sun dial near the children's play room.

Turn right and walk past rooms 15 – 41. Continue past room 405, and go through the stile Here you will see a signboard indicating the start of a number of walks.

For Fern Forest you need to head out directly away from the hotel towards the mountains.

Walking along this path you will pass the turn off down to the Cathedral Peak path and also the turn off to the Lake Jarred view site. A little further on you will see a sign which indicates the direction to Fern Forest.

The path then leads you down to the crossing of the uMlambonja River. The easiest crossing point is at the trout farm water take off weir. Depending on the water level you can cross either above the weir or, by scrambling over the wall on your right, you can cross through the pool below the weir. Either way you will need to wade through the river.

Please note that after heavy rains, especially during summer, it can often be too dangerous to attempt crossing at all. Do not do so if the river is flowing too strongly.

You are advised to pack your cameras and other water sensitive valuables into a plastic bag. Wearing a strapped sandal can also protect your feet and afford better grip during the crossing.

After the crossing a sign directs you upstream along a path.

You will then come to the smaller Oqalweni River which you need to cross. The path then leads up the valley to your right towards the Fern Forest. You begin to climb away from the river and after about 50 m you will see a crumbling stone cairn and a wooden sign indicating a sharp left turn up the zigzags to One Tree Hill.

You stay right and head up the valley towards the forest.

As you see the yellowwood forest ahead of you the path begins to wind down to the pool and the indigenous forest. It is very rewarding to take a walk a little bit higher up the river and see the flora and fauna.



# Blue Pools

2½-3 HOURS RETURN

DIFFICULTY: "B" MODERATE

The 2½-3 hour return walk to Blue Pools begins at the sundial near the children's play room. Leave the sundial and head straight up the stairs following the concrete path and the signs to the stables.

At the road, turn right and head up the hill. You will pass the cell phone tower on your left and water reservoirs on both sides of you.

Continue up the track keeping the stables on your left before easing right up the track towards the helipad.

Pass around to the left of the helipad buildings and then follow the rough road up the hill. At the top you will come onto a soccer field.

The path now goes along the right hand touchline of the soccer field and then begins to head into the uMlambonja valley.

A few minutes later you will notice an unmarked fork going off to the left, but you must stay right, on the main path, and head down into the valley.

The next land mark will be a triangular stone cairn showing Blue Pools to the left and Xeni Cave and Neptune's Pool to the right.

Directly ahead of you will notice the spur, which separates the Tseketseke and uMlambonjaRiver valleys. Looking left up the Tseketseke Valley you will see Cleft Peak and the Pyramid whilst on your right up the uMlambonja Valley will be Cockade, Elephant and the sheer wall of the uMlambonja Buttress visible behind the sharp peak of Mount Helga.

Once in the Tseketseke valley the path climbs gently keeping to the left bank, affording beautiful views of the stream. It will eventually lead into the cool shade of indigenous forest where you can claim your reward on a hot day by having a dip in the clear pools of this bubbling mountain stream.



# Albert Falls

2½ HOURS RETURN

DIFFICULTY: B-C MODERATE to STRENUOUS

This 2½ hour return walk to Doreen Falls and Albert Falls starts at the sundial near the children's play room.

Leave the sundial and head straight up the stairs following the concrete path and the signs to the stables.

At the road, turn right and head up the hill. You will pass the cell phone tower on your left and water reservoirs on both sides of you.

The stable entrance will be on your left.

Go through the gate/stile and head diagonally down the path way with the paddock on your right. Go through the gate and follow the path. On your right will be a wattle plantation. Soon you will come to a crossroad, (a sign indicates that the jogging trail goes off to the right at this point) – continue straight on.

Soon you will see a sign where the path splits, the one going right up the hill to Mushroom Rock and the other keeping left and heading up the valley towards Doreen Falls. You will cross a little stream and then the path goes right up a stepped path making for comfortable walking.

A little further on, the path again splits At this point you will see an old concrete sign board with the words “Doreen Falls” on it parallel to the path. The right hand path (well used) is the one heading to Doreen Falls and the left heads up the ridge towards Ribbon Falls

Stay right and you will find Doreen Falls just ahead of you.

Having quenched your thirst at the pool, you must then get back onto the path and commence the fairly steep climb up stream to Albert Falls. The path meanders up the right hand bank of the river until just below the falls where it enters the forested area.

You can then relax in the cool shade beside the pool into which Albert Falls cascades.



# Lake William

2½ - 3 hour RETURN TRIP

DIFFICULTY: 'A-B' - MODERATE

This walk starts at the sundial near the children's play room. From there head down, past the chapel and to the tar road. Go down the main road and around the hairpin bend towards the golf course. Turn left across the suspension bridge and make your way up to the clubhouse. Proceed past the golf clubhouse on the left hand side up the gravel road and at the sign turn left across the fairway. Be aware that golfers have right of way.

On the other side of the fairway you will see a sign indicating Baboon Rock and Lake William. Follow this route that heads up the small valley. The path leads up the ridge climbing gently until you reach a split indicating Lake William to the left and Baboon Rock to the right. Follow the left hand route towards the mountain bike track. This is an old forest road and is clearly visible all the way to the lake. This track is marked at various occasions.

This route winds its way uphill until you come upon Lake William on your right hand side.

There are spectacular views of the escarpment from the lake which has a peaceful and tranquil setting and abundant birdlife.

Please be aware that the last section of this walk before reaching the lake is on a designated mountain bike trail so be aware of cyclists. It is recommended that you return on the same route.



# Neptune's Pool

4 HOURS RETURN

DIFFICULTY: "B" - MODERATE

The 4 hour return walk to Neptune's Pool begins at the sundial near the children's play room. Leave the sundial and head straight up the stairs following the concrete path and the signs to the stables.

At the road, turn right and head up the hill. You will pass the cell phone tower on your left and water reservoirs on both sides of you.

Continue up the track keeping the stables on your left before easing right up the track towards the helipad.

Pass around to the left of the helipad buildings and then follow the rough road up the hill. At the top you will come onto a soccer field. The path now goes along the right hand touchline of the soccer field and then begins to head into the uMlambonja valley.

A few minutes later you will notice an unmarked fork going off to the left, but you must stay right, on the main path, and head down into the valley. The next land mark will be a triangular stone cairn showing Blue Pools to the left and Xeni Cave and Neptune's Pool to the right. Directly ahead of you will notice the spur, which separates the Tseketseke and uMlambonjaRiver valleys. Looking left up the Tseketseke Valley you will see Cleft Peak and the Pyramid whilst on your right up the uMlambonja Valley will be Cockade, Elephant and the sheer wall of the uMlambonja Buttress visible behind the sharp peak of Mount Helga.

Soon after the sign the path meets the TseketsekeRiver and you cross it before continuing up the uMlambonja valley. Later you will then cross another tributary, the XeniRiver.

Soon after this crossing you will see a stone cairn indicating the sharp right turn for Neptune's Pool and that the path going straight goes up the XeniRiver valley.

After taking this right turn, further up the valley, you will reach a sign fitted into a large rock face indicating a sharp left turn out of the valley towards the contour path and a right turn, down into the river bed for Neptune's Pool. At this point you climb into the river valley and boulder hop up stream to reach Neptune's Pool.



# Rainbow Gorge

4½-5 HOURS RETURN

DIFFICULTY: "B/C"-MODERATE to STRENUOUS

The 4½-5 hour return walk to Rainbow Gorge on the eNdumeni River begins at Reception.

Walk out of Reception, turn right, and head up the road past the games room. About 50m later, just as the road starts to climb steeply to the right, you will see a stone cairn indicating a left turn down the hill marked Doreen Falls and Rainbow Gorge. Head down the path and cross the river. Immediately after the crossing take the left fork. The path will then follow a reasonably level contour around the base of Tryme Hill. You will be able to see the Didima chalets ahead of you on your left.

As you round the corner of Tryme Hill you will see the concrete path going down to the Didima Camp. Continue along the path, and by looking left you will notice the Mike's Pass road winding up the hill opposite you. Soon you will enter the lovely indigenous forest. From here another 35-45 minutes of cool shady forested walk will bring you to the hanging boulder.

The path runs mainly along the right hand bank of the river with numerous little paths taking you down into the river bed. As the valley narrows and the sides get steeper, the path will lead you into the river with 2 or 3 crossings necessary to reach the path which will then be on the left hand bank.

A little way up the gorge you will see, and can pass under, the amazing hanging boulder. Be careful here as the constant spray makes the rocks very slippery.

If the water is low enough and you continue for another 50 m past the rock, you will come across a chain ladder which takes you to the top of the small waterfall. This usually concludes the walk although by boulder hopping you can continue further upstream. Return the same way noticing the amazing trees & plants along the route.



# Mushroom Rock

3 HOURS RETURN

DIFFICULTY: "C" = STRENUOUS

The 3 hour return walk to Mushroom Rock begins at the sundial near the children's play room.

Leave the sundial and head straight up the stairs following the concrete path and the signs to the stables.

At the road, turn right and head up the hill. You will pass the cell phone tower on your left and water reservoirs on both sides of you.

The stable entrance will be on your left. Go through the gate/stile and head diagonally down the path way with the paddock on your right.

Go through the gate and follow the path. On your right will be a wattle plantation.

Soon you will come to a crossroad, (a sign indicates that the jogging trail goes off to the right at this point) – continue straight on. Soon you will see a sign where the path splits, the one going right up the hill to Mushroom Rock and the other keeping left and heading up the valley towards Doreen Falls.

From this point the path to Mushroom Rock rises steadily ascending the ridge. After climbing for some time the path will suddenly get level. At this point there is wooden sign indicating you must turn sharp right and climb up the wooden ladder you will see above you on the right. (The level path also makes its way to Mushroom Rock but it is a much longer and slower route.)

The path then continues up steeply towards Mushroom Rock which you can now see just blow the sky line.

You return the same by the same route.



# Ribbon Falls

3½ HOURS RETURN

DIFFICULTY: "C"-STRENUOUS

This 3½ hour return walk to Ribbon Falls begins at the sundial near the children's play room.

Leave the sundial and head straight up the stairs following the concrete path and the signs to the stables.

At the road, turn right and head up the hill. You will pass the cell phone tower on your left and water reservoirs on both sides of you.

The stable entrance will be on your left. Go through the gate/stile and head diagonally down the path way with the paddock on your right.

Go through the gate and follow the path. On your right will be a wattle plantation.

Soon you will come to a crossroad, (a sign indicates that the jogging trail goes off to the right at this point) – continue straight on. Soon you will see a sign where the path splits, the one going right up the hill to Mushroom Rock and the other keeping left and heading up the valley towards Doreen Falls.

You will cross a little stream and then the path goes right up a stepped path making for comfortable walking.

A little further on, the path again splits or forks. At this point you will see an old concrete sign board with the words "Doreen Falls" on it parallel to the path. The right hand path(well used) is the one heading to Doreen Falls and the left heads up the ridge towards Ribbon Falls. The path now becomes steep and rocky as you work your way onto the main ridge. At one point the path appears to run out at a rock face. A short scramble up the wooden ladder on the rock on is required. After that the path goes around to the right of the main ridge and climbs gradually up towards Ribbon Falls.

You will be able to see the falls on your right at the head of the valley above the natural indigenous forest. As you head into this valley the path will split and go steeply up to the left. This will lead you up to the contour. You stay right and head in towards the falls, passing Ribbon Falls cave on the way.



# One Tree Hill

3½ HOURS RETURN

DIFFICULTY: "C"-STRENUOUS

The 3½ hour walk to the summit of One Tree Hill begins near at the sun dial near the children's play room. Turn right and walk past rooms 15 – 41. Continue past room 405, and go through the stile. Here you will see a signboard indicating the start of a number of walks.

For One Tree Hill you need to head out directly away from the hotel towards the mountains. Walking along this path you will pass the turn off down to the Cathedral Peak path and also the turn off to the Lake Jarred view site. A little further on you will see a sign which indicates the direction to Fern Forest. You are to follow all the signs leading to the Fern Forest. Directly ahead of you, you will see your goal – One Tree Hill.

The path then leads you down to the crossing of the uMlambonja River. The easiest crossing point is at the trout farm water take off weir. Depending on the water level you can cross either above the weir or, by scrambling over the wall on your right, you can cross through the pool below the weir. Either way you will need to wade through the river.

Please note that after heavy rains, especially during summer, it can often be too dangerous to attempt crossing at all. Do not do so if the river is flowing too strongly.

You are advised to pack your cameras and other water sensitive valuables into a plastic bag. Wearing a strapped sandal can also protect your feet and afford better grip during the crossing.

After the crossing a sign directs you upstream along a path.

You will then come to the smaller Oqalweni River which you need to cross. The path then leads up the valley to your right towards the Fern Forest. You begin to climb away from the river and after about 50 m you will see a crumbling stone cairn and a wooden sign indicating a sharp left turn up the zigzags to One Tree Hill. The path follows a series of switch-backs to make the climb easier for you. Please do not take shortcuts as this leads to severe erosion problems when the grass that binds the soil is destroyed.

It is worth noting that the path is on the north-east face of this hill and in the morning and midday the sun bakes the hill. Take plenty of water, wear a hat and apply sunscreen, especially on the back of your legs. As you reach the summit and look down at the breathtaking view, you can be proud that you have reached an altitude of 1958m – 488m above the hotel.



# Baboon Rock

4 HOURS RETURN

DIFFICULTY: "C" -STRENUOUS

The 4 hour walk to Baboon Rock starts from the sundial near the children's play room. Head down, past the chapel to the tar road. Go down the main road, and around the hairpin bend towards the golf course. Turn left across the suspension bridge and make your way towards the golf course club house.

Continue up the road, crossing the fairway, and just as it turns and you can see the clubhouse in front of you, take the rough sand road on your left. Within 100m you will see a sign to the right to Baboon Rock on the edge of the fairway. Head up on the left hand side of the fairway and just beyond the green you will see the path that heads up the small valley. The path winds up the ridge climbing gently until you reach the spur that rises to form the Baboon Rock feature.

At the base of the spur you will find a stone cairn at a crossroad. You must turn sharp left here, going up the ridge. Be careful as it passes close to some precipitous edges. At one point a scramble up some rocks is required.

The path leads to the right around the base of Baboon Rock. A beautiful valley and indigenous forest lie below the steep slopes on your right as you traverse up to the skyline. Once at the top of the ridge, to reach the actual top of Baboon Rock you need to turn left and follow the ridge.

The last section to the actual Baboon Rock feature is very precipitous with steep drops down on both sides of you. Be very careful and do not attempt this if it is wet or slippery.