

Hiking

From Drakensberg Sun Hotel:

A very popular and easy circular walk (2 ½ hours return) departs from the Drakensberg Sun chalets and takes you through the kwaNdema Forest through to the Blue Grotto. On the way back you pass the route to Barry's Grave, a climbing legend in the 1930s called 'the tiger' by his generation. Another path takes you up the iNkwakwa Stream through Fern Forest to a waterfall at the top (2 hours return).

A longer and more strenuous round trip (4 hours return) takes you up the Steilberg (translated from Afrikaans as steep hill), down Van Damm's Cascades and back to the hotel via the Blue Grotto.

The hike to Stable Cave (9 hours or 2 days return) takes you on the same route as Steilberg above but you continue from there up Jacob's Ladder until you plateau onto the Little 'Berg with the Valley of Pools to your right and the eMhlawazini Valley to the left. If you have booked the cave, overnight here and head back after exploring the area the next morning.

From Monk's Cowl:

As mentioned, you can get an A4 map from the office which details a number of good day walks. The following hike starts you on a route which begins some of the more challenging overnight hikes:

The Sphinx and Crystal Falls walk (2 ½ hours return) takes you past the magical falls and then up the Sphinx to a photographer's paradise at Breakfast stream. You can also continue past Breakfast Stream to Blind Man's Corner giving you superb views into Wonder Valley.

Cathedral Peak Area:

From the Cathedral Peak Hotel, this extreme hike (8 hours return) takes you straight up Cathedral Peak itself. It is a popular walk for the amazing views you get to the South over the Eye of the Needle to Cathkin and the peaks in the area including the Bell.

The Mlamboja Valley hike (4 hours return) reveals beautiful plant and bird life so pack your binoculars. It takes you past Neptune's Pools and to Marble Baths so pack a costume if it is warm enough to take advantage of some of the world's best outdoor pools.

The Rainbow Gorge hike (4 hours return) takes you up the Ndumeni River Gorge shows of some of the beauty of the forests and gorges in the Drakensberg. Aptly named for the kaleidoscope that plays in the stream, this gorge is where you would expect to find the Faerie Folk.

Mushroom Rock (3 hours return) is a popular round trip for the unusual rock formation as well as Albert Falls and Doreen Falls which you can stop at on your way back. The view over the Little 'Berg to the escarpment wall is wonderful at sunrise.

From Witsieshoek Mountain Resort (accessed through Qwa-Qwa in the Free State):

The Chain Ladder (6 hours return), is the easiest way to get on top of the Drakensberg (up the 100 rung chain ladder) and you get one of the best views on offer in the world. It is also where the Thukela Falls (the fourth highest in the world) plunges 614m into the Thukela Gorge below. Also on offer is Ribbon Falls (further south of the Thukela Falls along the Amphitheatre escarpment) and about 2 ½ km inland from the Falls you get on top of Mont-aux-Sources weighing in at 3 282m.

From Royal Natal National Park:

To access the Thukela Gorge (6 hours return) you hike through the best on offer in the 'Berg - varying vegetation, scenery and topography and of course the gorge itself. For the more adventurous, you can scramble and boulder-hop further up the Thukela's course which will reward you with the humbling experience of coming face-to-face with the basalt wall that stretches up to around a kilometre - the Amphitheatre itself.

Gudu Bush and Falls (2 hours return) is an easy walk that takes you through some wonderful 'Berg habitats the large pool at Gudu Falls.