

WWW.STUDENTADVENTURES.CO.ZA

DRAKENSBERG HIKE

PRE TRIP BRIEFING



OVERVIEW & CAMPSITE



THE TRIP



FITNESS & WEATHER



HOW TO GET THERE



EMERGENCY & CANCELLATION

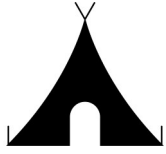


FOOD



GEAR & PACK LIST





OVERVIEW & CAMPSITE

Where does the trip start and other need-to-know bits:

The trip is at Monk's Cowl in the Drakensberg and is 5 nights in total. This will consist of the first night camping at Monks Cowl Campsite, 3 nights 'wild' camping in tents / caves (where available en-route) and the last night shared 'hard' accommodation in a farm house for a braai and 'fines night' (if you wish) before departure.

Monk's Cowl is situated in the Central Drakensberg, on Road R600. Monks Cowl, taking its name from the peak sandwiched between the towering Champagne Castle and Cathkin mountains, is part of the 260 000 ha Maloti-Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site. Monks Cowl is the gateway to some of the most magnificent mountain Wilderness areas in Africa.

Monk's Cowl campsite information:

- Entrance gates to the reserve are open daily between 06:00 - 18:00
 - The nearest village which has a full range of services is Winterton 35 km from Monk's Cowl
 - Firewood is available at Monk's Cowl Curio Shop. There are very basic food supplies available, and a restaurant for light meals operate from 08:00 – 16:00, and is adjacent to the campsite.
 - There is a well-stocked supermarket (Oaks Supermarket) a short distance from Monks Cowl (10 minutes). Fuel and charcoal may be purchased from Oaks Supermarket
 - Loud music is not allowed at Monk's Cowl
 - There is a plugpoint at the campsite; please bring your own 2-point plug.
 - No open fires are allowed while hiking - only gas cookers may be used
- There is no Wifi at the campsite at Monk's but there is limited cell reception. Time to say bye to technology and hallo to nature! There will be intermittent cell reception during the hiking days.





THE TRIP

Detail about the trip:

Day 1:

Arrive at the Monk's Cowl campsite by latest 15:00. Meet your guide and there will be a kit check and rented gear will be distributed. Your guide will cover all detail of the hike with you, check on fitness levels, goals (and fears!) and discuss any medical issues as well as emergency procedures. You will be given a full safety briefing. Your guide will help you with pack planning and to ensure no unnecessary or unwanted items are taken along on the hike. All extra kit can be locked in the boot of your car in the safe car park.

Stay the night in the campsite camping in tents and enjoy a potjie, prepared as a team effort. The car park access is right next to the campsite.

Day 2:

Monk's Cowl Campsite to Shada Ridge
10 Km: Moderate

After a quick breakfast and final pack check, you are ready to go. The hike starts from the Monk's Cowl campsite and starts with a steady zig-zag climb through the indigenous forests along the sandstone cliffs of the Eliot Formation. After emerging onto the summit plateau of the Little 'Berg, we aim for contour path and use this mostly level trail to head south towards Shada.

Total altitude gain today is 500m, most of which is in the first half when the legs are fresh.





THE TRIP

Day 3:

Shada Ridge to Hlathikulu Nek

11 Km: Moderate to challenging

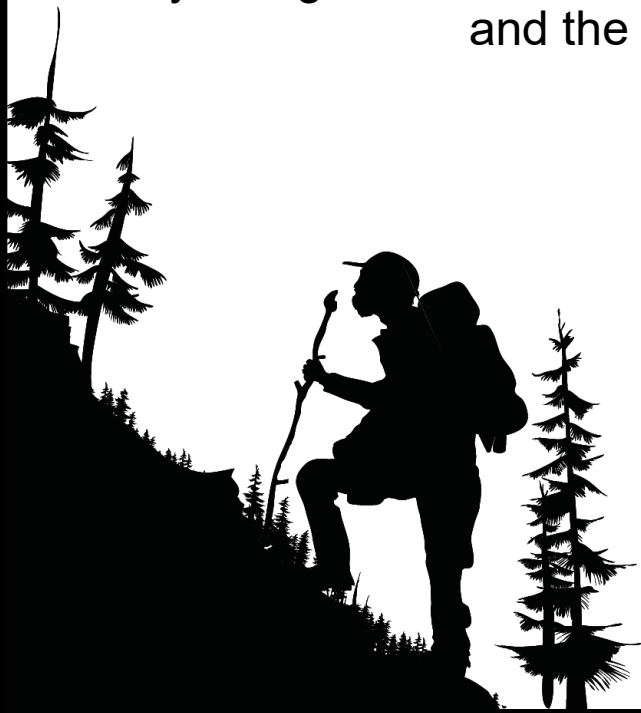
This day has a “big mountain” feeling. After leaving contour path we climb steadily and occasionally steeply into the Afro-alpine zone of the High ‘Berg, topping out at around 3000m. We follow a faint path between Monk’s Cowl and Cathkin Peak, with spectacular views (if the weather plays along), before descending to “sleep low” at 2300m. Total altitude gain today is around 700m, so at times the going may be tough. If the weather is inclement, we will change this day to stay out of the High ‘Berg.

Day 4:

Hlathikulu Nek to Stable Cave

10 Km: Easy to moderate

After the big climb of yesterday, today it will be a relieve to mostly contour and descend. This is not an anti-climax as the day has great views of the basalt towers and turrets above, and the rolling hills below.





THE TRIP

Day 5:

Stable Cave to farmhouse in the valley

13 Km: Easy

From Stable Cave there is a steep zig-zag descent back through the sandstone cliffs before relaxing back into a steady descent to exit the Maloti Drakensberg Park. A quick walk through farmland and rural settlements brings us our end-point with a hot shower and warm bed awaiting.

You will finish the hike and final eve with a braai.

Braai packs, wood, charcoal and ice will be provided.

Day 6:

Depart after having coffee/tea & rusks.

Opt for a cooked breakfast/brunch at any of the close by restaurants (not included).

Departure latest 10:00.





FITNESS

Required fitness level:

Overnight hiking routes extend deep into valleys and forests of the central Drakensberg and up onto the main escarpment, ensuring a pure wilderness experience with breath-taking views and scenery. The route on offer is within the ability of every moderately active student but we suggest you put some training in before you go. The fitter you are, the more rewarding the experience will be. However, if needs be, routes can be adjusted to accommodate all levels of experience and fitness.





WEATHER

The weather:

In summer (November - March) it is mostly hot with afternoon thunderstorms from time to time, with February being the hottest month.

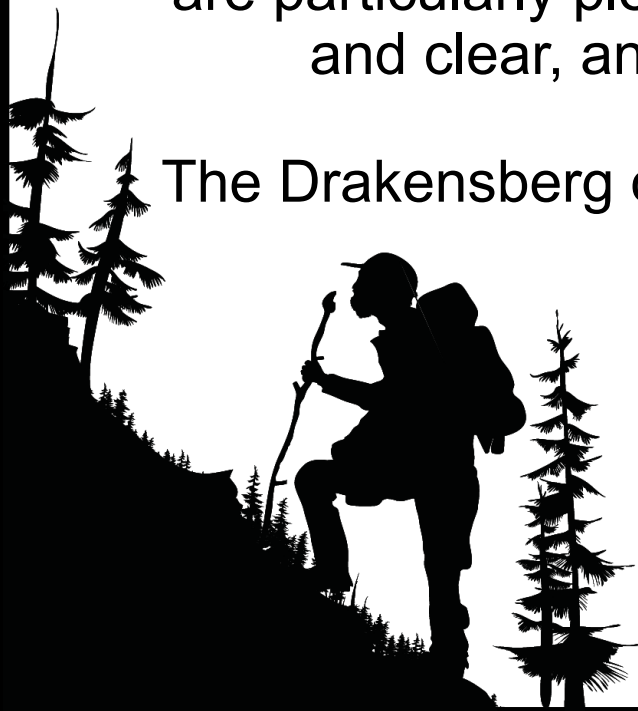
During the day it ranges between 15° - 32° and at night temperatures are mild around 10° but could even be as low as 0°, depending on your altitude.

In winter (June - September) it is dry with the occasional snowstorm and frost.

Day temperatures between 8° - 20°, but night temperatures can drop way below 0° C at night.

Spring and autumn (April/May/June & August/September/October) in the Drakensberg are particularly pleasant. The days are warm and clear, and the nights are cool.

The Drakensberg of Kwazulu Natal is malaria free.





HOW TO GET THERE

Transport and how to get there:

Own transport. The easiest option is to carpool. If you prefer booking a bus, we can recommend Paarl Rock.

Shuttle service: This needs to be arranged when making your booking and can be arranged from Pietermaritzburg or Durban airport at R1000 per person, so return is R2000 per person. Note: minimum 3 pax required for transfer)

FROM GAUTENG:

Firstly, if you are travelling from Gauteng, take the N3 to Harrismith. At Harrismith turn left onto the N5 to Bethlehem. But don't forget to turn left onto the R74 to Bergville. Then keep on the R74, travelling past the magnificent Sterkfontein Dam and Little Switzerland. This area is also known as Oliviershoek Pass. Carry on along the R74 and travel through Bergville. You will then reach Winterton. At the robots just after the "Pig and Plough" turn right onto the R600. Keep on the R600, for 35km.





HOW TO GET THERE

FROM DURBAN OR PIETERMARITZBURG:

Travel on the N3 from Durban. Do not take the Loskop/ Estcourt Offramp (179). Continue until you see the Bergville/Winterton turnoff and carry on 'till your reach Winterton. Continue through town and turn left opposite the Engen garage. Keep on the R600, for 35km.

FROM THE FREE STATE:

Travel along the N5 through Bethlehem. Turn right onto the R74 just before Harrismith. Then keep on the R74, travelling past the magnificent Sterkfontein Dam and Little Switzerland.

This area is also known as Oliviershoek Pass. Carry on along the R74 and travel through Bergville.

You will then reach Winterton. At the robots just after the "Pig and Plough" turn right onto the R600.

Keep on the R600, for 35km.





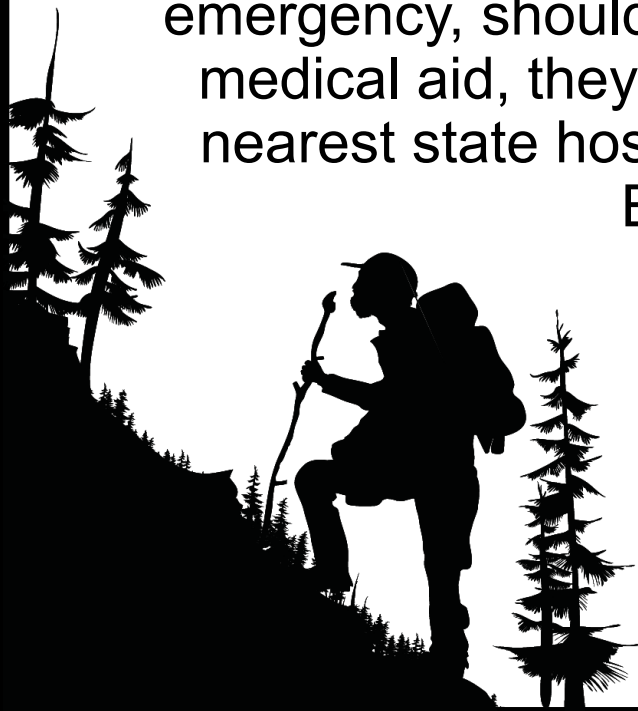
EMERGENCY

In case of emergency:

Your qualified local guide has a first aid level 3 and carries a limited first aid kit. Your guide is trained in rescue coordination and will brief you on procedures in case of emergency.

However, you must be aware that we are accessing remote wilderness areas, so some preparation and commitment is needed from all participants.

Please make sure you have adequate travel insurance to cover any illness, injuries, or cancellations for any reasons, such as Pandemic or Force Majeure. In case of no travel insurance, appropriate medical aid is a highly recommended requirement. In case of emergency, should the participant not have a medical aid, they will be transported to the nearest state hospital (either Ladysmith or Estcourt).



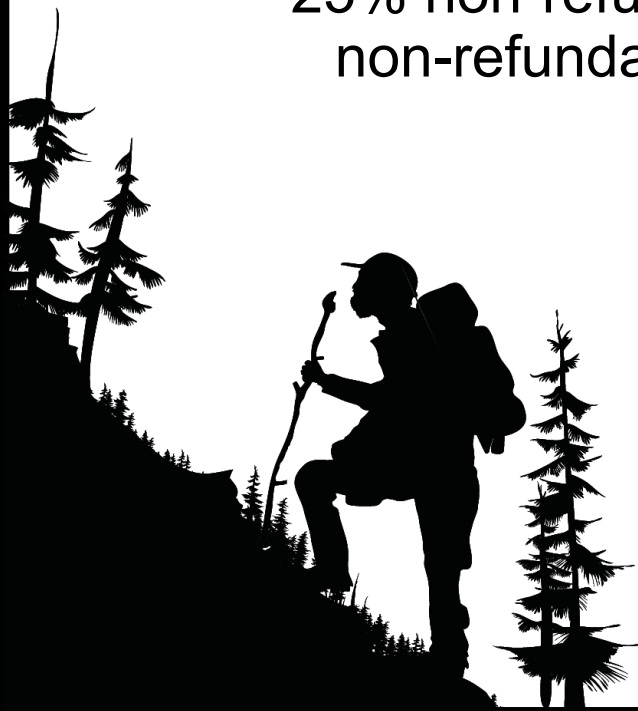


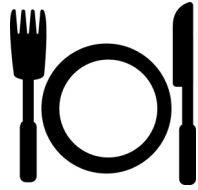
CANCELLATION

Cancellation Policy:

Entrants needing to cancel will forfeit the following portion of their entry fee:
25% deposit fee is non-refundable if you cancel after you sign up for the trip
Should you cancel the entire trip before 1 month of the start of the trip, you will forfeit another 50%.

If you cancel within one month before the trip arrival and can't fill your spot with someone else within 48 hours of your cancellation, you will forfeit the full amount of R4800 of the trip
In case of a cancellation, the participant may transfer their entry to another person, but the 25% non-refundable deposit will be non-refundable for admin costs.





FOOD

Food and sample meal ideas:

All hike food will be prepared by you and your cooking partner, with lunches being non-cooked snack-type foods. Your food will be bought in on your behalf and we will provide you with zip-lock bags to decanter from heavy or glass containers, and to portion meals. We will provide you with a larger bag so all food can be kept together. Basic spices like salt & pepper, dried herbs, chilli flakes & curry powder will be provided. Food provided is sufficient for a moderate meal for breakfasts/lunches/supper. Please bring your own preferential snacks for in-between meals (high energy dense nutrients)

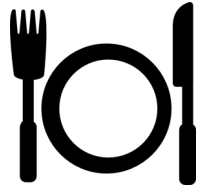
Water will be from the mountain streams and is clean to drink

Breakfasts provided:

‘Compact’ cereal like 75g Futurelife or 75g Pro-Nutro
2 rusks

Quick cooking oats with raisins
Muesli combined with milk powder
Eggs (pre-boiled)
Breakfast bars
Dried fruit





FOOD

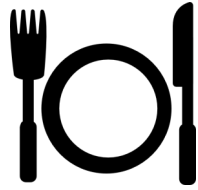
Lunches provided:

Provita / Pita bread / rye bread / rice cakes / Tortillas
Cheese spread (processed) or hard cheese (cheddar)
Meat (biltong / dried wors / salami / Tuna)
Eggs (pre-boiled)
Nut butters / jam
Olives
Sundried tomatoes
Hummus

Suppers provided:

Instant soup
Starch (Rice Noodles / Pasta / Cous-Cous / instant rice /
instant mashed potato) with stock cubes
Meat (biltong / salami / Tuna / Chorizo sausage / tinned
ham)
Lentils or split peas (vegetarians)
Soya mince
Pasta & Sauce
Pesto
Sundried tomatoes
Dried vegetables (mushrooms / olives)





FOOD

Drinks provided:

Instant coffee, tea, rooibos tea & hot chocolate
Milk powder
Sugar

Snack ideas (bring your own):

You are required to bring your own snacks for in between meals as everyone has different likes and budgets.

Examples of snacks are:

Energy bars, snack bars, nut bars or similar
Dried fruit like dates, mango, peaches
Peanuts & raisins
Nuts
Wine gums, chocolate, other sweets
Biltong / dried wors





THE PACK LIST

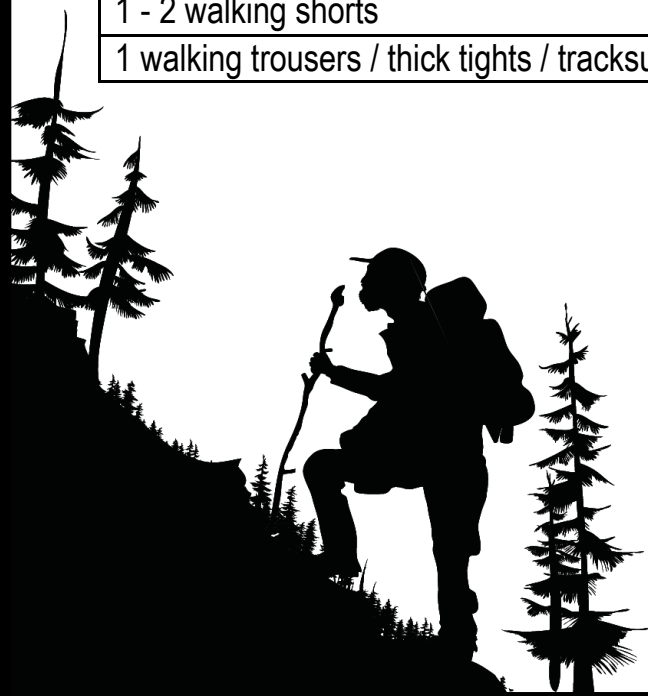
The following is a guideline list of things to pack for the trip.

Gear hire options:

Backpack hire: R300 per backpack for 4 nights

Back Pack	Between 55 – 70 Litres.
Back Pack Liner (optional)	Thick black bags can also be used
Hiking poles	Optional
Sleeping Bag with stuff sack	Minimum 2/3 season. Hollow Fibre or down, as light and compact as possible. Sleeping bag liner can be used for extra heat.
Sleeping Mat	Closed cell foam (the thicker ones are more comfortable) or Thermarest
Hiking Boots/Shoes	Not new! Must be walked in. Must have a good grip.
Crocs or flip flops / slops	For evenings
3 pairs Hiking Socks	Can wear thinner socks as liners underneath.
Clothes:	
Thermal underwear	Top and long johns - should be tight fitting
1 sun hat/cap	
1 beanie/buff	
1 - 2 short sleeve shirts	Preferably wicking
1 light long sleeve shirt	Moisture manager
1 - 2 walking shorts	
1 walking trousers / thick tights / tracksuit pants	For evenings / cold days

More items on the next page...





THE PACK LIST

1 mid layer fleece	
1 outer fleece or down jacket	
1 good quality waterproof jacket with hood	
1 waterproof outer trousers	Nice to have but optional
3 x Underwear	
1 x sports bra	
1 x kikoi / sarong / small compact quick dry towel	
1 x swimsuit (optional)	
Plate/bowl, mug, knife, fork, spoon	
Small container decanted dishwash soap and sponge (cut in half) with small drying towel	
Lighter/matches	
2 x 1L water bottle	Or water bladder + 500 ml water bottle
Personal toiletries	Decanted into small bottles. Take basics only. Biodegradable soap (can be used for hair too), toothbrush & toothpaste, body/ face cream

More items on the next page...





THE PACK LIST

Personal meds	Chronic meds, supplements, etc.
Small first aid kit	Plasters, pain medication, anti-inflammatory, anti-histamines, mosqui repellent, diarrhoea, constipation, space blanket
Sunscreen	At least SPF 30-50
Lip-balm	
Sunglasses (optional)	
Face cloth	
Toilet paper	Packaged in a zip-lock bag to stay dry
Wet wipes (optional)	
Phone/Camera	
Fully charged battery pack (to charge cell phone)	
Book	Optional
Reading glasses	Optional
Headlamp (very important!)	Extra batteries



BUDGET STUDENT ADVENTURES



CONTACT US

**If you have any questions,
please contact Mea la Grange on
076 842 9930 or
info@studentadventures.co.za**

“The purpose of life, after all, is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience.” – Eleanor Roosevelt

