**THE GIANT'S CUP HIKING TRAIL**

**Gate Time: Oct - Mar = 05h00 -19h00 and Apr - Sept = 06h00 - 18h00. Hikers should hike in parties of three or more individuals. Fires may not be made in the wilderness area or in caves. For visitors own safety, the Mountain Rescue Register must be filled in. Visitors are advised to bring their own equipment.**

The Giant's Cup Trail runs along the foothills of the Drakensberg from Sani Pass to Bushman's Nek. Some sections are steep but any reasonably fit person, including children, will have no difficulty in completing each section. The trail lies almost entirely within the Cobham and Garden Castle Reserves.

Small patches of indigenous forest are seen on the first day but most of the trail passes through mountain grassland with wide views to the crests of the mountains.

The trail consists of five sections with overnight accommodation (usually a farmhouse) at the end of each section.

**HOW TO GET THERE:**

Follow the N3 freeway taking the R617 from the Merrivale/Southern Drakensberg off-ramp. Follow the R617 through Bulwer, joining the R612. Turn right onto the R612 to Underberg and then travel to Himeville. The route to Sani Pass is clearly marked from Himeville.

**CLIMATE:**

At these altitudes nights are cool in summer and very cold in winter. Snow can occur during any month of the year. The rain falls mainly in summer, when mists and low cloud are common. Winter and autumn days are usually fine and warm. The weather can, however, change rapidly. It is essential, therefore, to be equipped to cope with severe changes of weather.

**FAUNA:**

A variety of animals may be seen along the trail, ranging from eland to dassies (hyrax). Porcupines also frequent the area. Birds are less common at these higher altitudes but birds of prey such as the black eagle and the jackal buzzard may be seen. The larger streams contain trout. A rod permit is required for fishing.

**BOOKINGS:**

At least one adult must accompany each group of up to 10 persons under the age of 18 and hikers must stay on the marked route in groups of not less than 3 persons. This is a safety precaution in case of accidents or other problems.

Rate R135.00 pppd , admin fee R55.00 once off per reservation

**PLEASE NOTE:**

You may start your hiking tour only at an official starting point (Sani Pass, Cobham or Swiman) and may stay only in overnight facilities provided for this purpose.

Tents are not permitted.

Plan your hiking tour accordingly. Hikers are requested not to remove mattress from the huts when staying in trail huts. Hiking is allowed only in the direction indicated on the map.

Maps (waterproof or plain), T-Shirts and badges are available at the Cobham and Garden Castle Offices. It is strongly recommended that at least one map per group is purchased.

***NO MATRASSES AT MZIMKHULWANA HUT, flat boards on beds, please take own roll up matrasses.***

**TRANSPORT AND PARKING:**

Vehicles may only be parked at points indicated as parking areas on the map. You leave your vehicle unattended at your own risk. You are responsible for your own transport to the starting point and also from the end point back to your vehicle. This is not a round route; the start and finish are a long way apart.

The road to Mzimkhulwana and Winterhoek crosses private property. Trespassers will be prosecuted.

Should you need transport to and from the beginning of the trail please contact:

Sani Pass Tours : 033 7011064 / 0721244356

Roof of Africa Tours: [roofofafricatours@gmail.com](mailto:roofofafricatours@gmail.com) / [www.roofofafricatours.co.za](http://www.roofofafricatours.co.za) / 083 212 7856

**TRAIL DETAILS:**

Duration: 5 days (5 nights)

Total distance: 59,3 km

Overnight huts: Pholela, Mzimkhulwana, Winterhoek, Swiman and Bushman's Nek

Start: Foot of Sani Pass beyond the hotel

End: Bushman's Nek

The trail may be shortened by one or two days by starting or finishing at Pholela or Swiman Huts, in which case vehicles may be parked at the Cobham or Garden Castle office parking complex.

The trail may not be started from Winterhoek or Mzimkhulwana Huts.

FACILITIES AT OVERNIGHT STOPS:

Each overnight stop can accommodate 30 persons and is provided with basic facilities of bunk beds and mattresses, benches, tables, broom and dust pan.

Hikers must supply their own bedding (e.g. sleeping bag), food, cooking and lighting equipment in the form of portable stoves, lamps and torches and are expected to leave the hut in a clean and tidy condition.

Flush toilets are provided and cold water is laid on at all huts.

Each farmhouse has a different design however, so that the number of rooms and number of bunks in rooms varies.

Parties of less than 30 must be prepared to share accommodation.

Firewood is not available. (While supplies last, firewood is available at Pholela and Swiman Huts).

Braai facilities are only available at Pholela and Swiman.

No fires are allowed at Mzimkhulwana and Winterhoek and Bushmans Nek huts.

***PLEASE NOTE: NO MATRASSES AT MZIMKHULWANA HUT, flat boards on beds, please take own roll up matrasses.***

**ROUTE DESCRIPTION:**

Day one (6 hours - 13,3 km)

The starting point is at the foot of the famous Sani Pass, highest mountain pass in South Africa. The Ngenwa pool is suitable for a lunch break on a sunny day or, if it is raining, there is a cave a little further along the trail. After this the trail ascends through attractive country into the Pholela valley, crossing a suspension bridge to the Pholela Hut. The Pholela Hut is one of the original farmhouses and its design has been altered as little as possible.

The trees in the vicinity were planted by the early settlers and are mainly exotic, including snow gum, cypress, pines and pin oak.

Overnight at Pholela Hut in Cobham Reserve.

Day two (3,5 hours - 9 km)

The trail ascends the long slope past Tortoise Rocks before dropping into the valley. The Mzimkhulwana Hut nestles alongside one of the tributaries close to a clear pool.

A good lunch spot is Bathplug Cave, named after a hole in the cave floor through which water disappears. Please do not deface/write, scratch, pour water on, or touch the Bushman paintings on the walls.

A variety of indigenous trees and flowers may be seen along the trail, including Cape holly, yellowwood, cabbage trees, proteas, tree ferns, watsonias and gladioli.

Overnight at Mzimkhulwana Hut in Cobham Reserve.

Day three (5,5 hours - 12,2 km)

Pleasant vistas present themselves on the long climb towards the Little Bamboo Mountain, named after the indigenous bamboo found here. Blue cranes frequent the area around Crane Tarn and Scottish names such as Inverness and Stromness have been given to farms by early Scots settlers. The Killiecrankie pools tempt one to swim in the clear, fresh mountain water. The lovely old oak trees around Winterhoek Hut were probably planted at about the end of the nineteenth centuary.

Overnight at Winterhoek Hut in Garden Castle.

Day four (6 hours - 12,8 km)

Be sure to fill your water bottle as few streams flow along this section of the trail during the dry season. There is a steep climb up the slopes of Garden Castle, after which the trail is relatively level to Swiman Hut.

Overnight at Swiman Hut in Garden Castle.

Day five (4 hours - 12 km)

From Swiman Hut the trail crosses into the wide Mzimude valley, climbs again towards the fire look-out post passing Langalibalele cave which has Bushmen paintings. Here again please do not deface/write, scratch, pour water on, or touch the paintings. Sleeping in Langalibalele cave is prohibited.

The Bushman's Nek Hut is on a short spur off the trail and can be by-passed by those not spending the night there. The trail ends at the parking area close to the Reserve entry point.

**RULES AND REGULATIONS:**

• No pets of any kind are allowed in the reserves.

• Littering is an offence. Hikers are requested to bring back all their refuse for disposal in the refuse bins provided in the camps and on the picnic sites. If you carry it in, please carry it out!

• It is an offence to pick or damage any plant or to disturb or kill any animal (including birds and their eggs, as well as reptiles), or to disfigure any rock or rock paintings in any way, or to remove any archaeological or fossil material.

• It is an offence to make fires in caves or in wilderness areas. The only places fires are permitted are in the braai facilities provided for at Pholela and Swiman Huts.

**INDEMNITY:**

Neither the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Board nor the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service accepts responsibility for any death, injury or illness sustained or suffered by any person, or theft, or loss of or damage to any property, occurring within or arising from a visit or visits to parks, reserves, or resorts under their management or control, howsoever caused, and whether allegedly due to the negligence of the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Board/KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service or any of their employees or agents, or arising from the use of any facilities supplied or made available.

5 day / night option:

Day 1: Parking Sani pass, hike to Pholela Hut

Day 2: Hike to Mzimkhulwana

Day 3: Hike to Winterhoek Hut

Day 4: Hike to Swiman Hut

Day 5: Hike to Bushman's Nek (Sleeping over at the hut optional)

The trail may be shortened by one or two days by starting or finishing at Pholela or Swiman Huts, in which case vehicles may be parked at the Cobham or Garden Castle office parking complex.

4 day / 3 night

Day 1: Parking Sani pass, hike to Pholela Hut

Day 2: Hike to Mzimkhulwana

Day 3: Hike to Winterhoek Hut

Day 4: depart from Garden Castle (Swinman hut)

4 day / 3 night

Day 1: parking Cobham (Pholela ) Hike to Mzimkhulwana

Day 2: Hike to Winterhoek Hut

Day 3: Hike to Swiman Hut

Day 4: Hike to Bushman's Nek (Sleeping over at the hut optional)

3 day option

Day 1: parking Cobham (Pholela ) Hike to Mzimkhulwana

Day 2: Hike to Winterhoek Hut

Day 3: Hike to Swiman Hut, depart from Garden Castle